

WORCESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILS

MEETING OF THE WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES BOARD

THURSDAY 17TH NOVEMBER 2022

AT 4.30 P.M.

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

MEMBERS: Bromsgrove District Council: Councillor H. J. Jones
Bromsgrove District Council: Councillor P.L. Thomas
Malvern Hills District Council: Councillor J. Raine
Malvern Hills District Council: Councillor B. Nielsen
Redditch Borough Council: Councillor S. Khan
Redditch Borough Council: Councillor N. Nazir
Worcester City Council: Councillor S. Cronin - Vice-Chairman
Worcester City Council: Councillor C. Mitchell
Wychavon District Council: Councillor D. Morris
Wychavon District Council: Councillor T. Rowley - Chairman
Wyre Forest District Council: Councillor N. Martin
Wyre Forest District Council: Councillor L. Whitehouse

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 23rd June and 6th October 2022 (Pages 1 - 24)
4. WRS Board Agenda Papers from 6th October 2022 (Pages 25 - 26)
5. WRS Revenue Monitoring April - Sept 2022 (Pages 27 - 38)
6. WRS Budgets 2023/24 - 2025/26 (Pages 39 - 52)
7. Activity and Performance Data Quarter 2 - 2022/2023 (Pages 53 - 92)
8. Update on progress of the automation project (Pages 93 - 94)

9. Information Report - Flexible WRS Workforce (Pages 95 - 98)
10. 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.

Parkside
Market Street
BROMSGROVE
Worcestershire
B61 8DA

9th November 2022

K. DICKS
Chief Executive

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

Parkside, Market Street, Bromsgrove, B61 8DA
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Email: p.ross@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk

GUIDANCE ON FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS

At the current time, seating at the meeting will be placed in such a way as to achieve as much space as possible for social distancing to help protect meeting participants.

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Notes:

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Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board
23rd June 2022

WORCESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILS

MEETING OF THE WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES BOARD

THURSDAY, 23RD JUNE 2022, AT 4.38 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors R. J. Deeming (substituting for Councillor H. J. Jones), P.L. Thomas, J. Raine, B. Nielsen, S. Khan, N. Nazir, S. Cronin, S. Ditta (substituting for Councillor C. Mitchell), T. Rowley and J. Thomas (substituting for Councillor N. Martin)

Observers: Mr. G. Day, Democratic Services Team (via Microsoft Teams)

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

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

1/22

ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED that Councillor T. Rowley, Wychavon District Council be elected Chairman of the Board for the ensuing municipal year.

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed everyone present.

2/22

ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED that Councillor S. Cronin, Worcester City Council be elected Vice-Chairman of the Board for the ensuing municipal year.

3/22

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTES

The following apologies for absence were received: -

Councillors H. J. Jones Bromsgrove District Council, C. Mitchell, Worcester City Council and N. Martin, Wyre Forest District Council with R. Deeming, Bromsgrove District Council, S. Ditta, Worcester City Council and J. Thomas, Wyre Forest District Council, in attendance respectively, as substitute Members.

Councillors D. Morris, Wychavon District Council and L. Whitehouse, Wyre Forest District Council.

4/22 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

5/22 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board held on 10th February 2022, were submitted.

RESOLVED that minutes of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board meeting held on 10th February 2022, be approved as a correct record.

6/22 **WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES - ANNUAL REPORT 2021/2022**

The Board considered a report which detailed the Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) Annual Report 2021/2022.

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

The Head of Regulatory Services highlighted that the report covered the performance of the service from 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022, both in terms of KPIs and highlights of activity, with a short summary activity report, as detailed at Appendix 5 to the report.

Last year continued to be dominated by the global Covid 19 pandemic, which required a significant resource input from WRS. The service took on several new work-streams to support pandemic response and delivered these well. This had however, meant that some areas of work were more limited during 2021/22, one example being the Food Standards Agency's work programme, which recommenced in September 2021 via their road-map back to a "new normal" scheduled for 1st April 2023.

Despite these additional commitments, performance remained good in most areas. Food business compliance rates remained high. Taxi license renewals were dealt with within a reasonable time. The taxi fleet appeared to be generally in good order, although the number of vehicles that failed either when submitted to a garage for interim test or, to a lesser extent, whilst in-service had increased, with one partner area standing out.

As with previous years, complaints against the service were significantly exceeded by compliments. The main issues for complainants related to people:

- Unhappy with our response to their complaint about nuisance.
- Having pest controller issues.

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- Unhappy with Covid Advisor advice.

Last year, many people were suffering from “Covid fatigue,” so it was not surprising that being reminded about some of the covid controls were not always welcomed.

However, with non-business customer satisfaction at only 61.5%, managers had realised that they needed to move forward on improving speed of response, speed of resolution and keeping people updated on progress. The nature of the service was such that officers would never be able to make everyone happy because a significant proportion of nuisance complaints would not amount to a statutory nuisance, but officers were aware that they could improve performance in this area. Some positions could not be back-filled so teams had been incredibly pressured.

Members were further informed that the Annual Report 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. The Report would be published on the WRS website and would be shared with other all partner authorities.

The Head of Regulatory Services responded to questions from Members with regard to staffing and explained that to a greater extent this had now been resolved, but it had put demand on the service with the covid grant funding ending at the end of March 2022. Officers still had to continue to carry out some work with businesses, so some staff contracts were extended. Members were reassured that there would be no further cost implications for partners with regard to staffing levels.

The Head of Regulatory Services further responded to questions from Members with regard to non-business customer satisfaction being low. Officers would ensure that they complied with the systems in place and with regard to noise complaints, they would keep people informed about any outcomes and timescales.

Members were further informed that with regard to the increase in noise complaints, that a lot of pubs had looked to diversify in order to raise additional income. Residents nearby had been used to having no noise during the pandemic, whilst premises were closed. The complaints were very low level, very minor, so not likely to see an increase in premises being called in for review at Licensing Sub-Committee meetings. The provisions in the Licensing Act 2003 were designed such that people living by premises that were not meeting the licensing objectives, were expected to be active citizens, willing to report any businesses in breach of the licensing objectives; and to call them in for review themselves with some support from the local authority if required. The system did not assume that all actions would be initiated and taken by the local authority or responsible authorities like the Police.

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The Community Environmental Health Manager responded to questions with regard to food hygiene inspections and in doing so informed the Board that displaying the 'Scores on the Doors' food hygiene rating was not a legal requirement.

With regards to further questions on the percentage of defective vehicles, the Head of Regulatory Services and Licensing Manager clarified the different regimes for taxi/private hire vehicles and large vehicles classed as Public Service Vehicles (PSV), that were regulated under different legislation.

Officers responded to further questions on the Annual Report, which included: -

- Air quality / planning guidance
- Standardisation of taxi standards across partner authorities.

The Chairman thanked the Head of Regulatory Services and officers for a detailed report.

RESOLVED: that the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Annual Report 2020/2021, be noted; and

- (a) that a copy of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Annual Report 2021/2022 be forwarded to the Chief Executive, Managing Director and Members of the six partner authorities.

7/22

WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES - REVENUE MONITORING APRIL - MARCH 2022 & ANNUAL RETURN

The Executive Director of Resources, Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) and Redditch Borough Council (RBC), introduced the report and in doing so drew Members' attention to the Recommendations as detailed on page 65 of the main agenda report.

The Executive Director of Resources confirmed that the report covered the period April to March 2022 and also included the Annual Return.

The detailed revenue report was attached at Appendix 1 to the report. This showed a final outturn refund of £397k, which represented 12.2% of the actual budget and was mainly due to: -

- A significant underspend on the stray dog contracts due to the service dealing with fewer straying incidents. Which was likely to be related to people working from home due to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, officers had noted an increase in stray dog numbers, so a similar underspend should not be anticipated for 2022/2023.
- The inability to recruit like for like numbers of employees to backfill capacity committed to pandemic response work.

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- The outturn underspend was £160k greater than that forecasted at Quarter 3. This was largely due to an additional £130k of income in relation to support for Covid grant funded work.

It was proposed that the 2021/2022 refund of £397k be refunded back to partners as detailed on page 65 of the main agenda report.

Appendix 1 to the report detailed the WRS – Profit & Loss Report 2020/2021 and the reasons for variances.

RESOLVED that

- a) the final financial position for the period April 2020 to March 2022, be noted;
- b) the refund of £397k to the participating Councils, be approved as follows: -

Council	Refund from 2021/2022 £'000
Bromsgrove District Council	58
Malvern Hills District Council	51
Redditch Borough Council	70
Worcester City Council	92
Wychavon District Council	60
Wyre Forest District Council	60
Total	397

8/22

ACTIVITY & PERFORMANCE DATA REPORT Q1 TO 4

The Community Environmental Health Manager, Worcestershire Regulatory Services presented the Activity and Performance Data for Quarters 1, 2, 3, and 4 for 2021/2022; and in doing so highlighted the following key points: -

ACTIVITY DATA

The final quarter of 2021/2022 followed on from a Christmas period free of Covid controls and Government continued to move away from controls, with all restrictions removed at the end of the period.

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) had announced its plan to commence its roadmap to normal operations during the Summer of

2021, and this had commenced in September, increasing demands on a still stretched team that was continuing to juggle Covid controls and particularly Local Outbreak Management work. A creditable 1718 interventions were completed during the year, with over 500 in quarter 4. The numbers of complaints about food continued a slight up-tic from quarter 3 through to quarter 4, although following the trend predicted previously. Officers had worked evenings and weekends on Covid related business.

Quarter 4 followed the slow downward trend in relation to dog related complaints and enquiries, however, the number of strays reported over the year had increased above the level pre-pandemic in 2019/2020. The latter was a slight concern as officers had predicted an increase as people who purchased dogs during lockdowns returned to the workplace.

Numbers of licensing applications fell slight from quarter 3 to quarter 4, although overall numbers for the year were above the previous year but had yet to return to the level pre-pandemic. 20% of applications were for temporary events as the hospitality industry sought to recover from the impacts of pandemic controls. Of the 466 complaints received last year, 36% related to the taxi trade and 20% related to alcohol licensed premises, with 19% relating to animal establishments.

For much of this year, officers continued to deliver Covid pandemic controls as well as our business-as-usual activities, but this year was effectively a transition so, by 31st March, all controls had been lifted. The service had remained engaged with the County Council Public Health team as the Local Outbreak Response team was maintained in a reduced form to respond to the continuing issues with Covid and to be prepared to re-vamp up activity should a more dangerous, novel variant emerge. There was no further financial commitment to covid control activity from Government for 2022/2023 so this was very much a year where accommodating life with Covid 19 was the norm and people would continue to return to pre-pandemic behaviours or establish new ones as we move to the oft quoted “new normal.”

COVID RELATED ACTIVITIES

Covid Advisors were out daily mainly supporting the vaccination drive. Clinics occurred in most districts, with local ones being set up in many areas to provide access for those harder to reach groups. Figures consistently showed lower uptake in our more deprived communities and those with a higher proportion of residents from ethnic minorities. The Advisors had delivered several roles in support of these very successful exercises. Contact tracing and lost to follow-up activity continued through the period until Government finally ended the need for this towards the end of the quarter.

The Chairman expressed his sincere thanks to officers for an informative report.

RESOLVED that the Activity and Performance Data Quarters 1, 2, 3 and 4 for 2021/2022, be noted and that Members use the contents of the report in their own reporting back to their respective partner authority.

9/22

INFORMATION REPORT - NIGHT TIME ECONOMY

The Licensing & Support Services Manager briefly introduced an information report on the work of the Night Time Economy (NTE) team.

Members were briefly informed that as detailed in the report that, since the lifting of all Covid 19 restrictions, with funding for work still committed, officers originally tasked with this work had turned their hands to dealing with a range of other issues that could arise in the NTE.

The NTE Teams visible presence alone, out of office hours, had been delivering a message that the district councils took their responsibilities seriously in dealing with issues that arise in the sector. The focus of the NTE team had been ensuring that the licensing objectives were upheld by premises. However, the flexibility shown by the officers recruited had allowed us to direct them to a much broader supporting role as part of WRS, as detailed fully on pages 130 of the main agenda report, as follows: -

- Monitoring of taxi licensing activities.
- Licensing Enforcement Activities including suspended licences.
- Noise checks.
- Simple food hygiene checks.

Members were further informed that the funding for this team will come to an end on 30th June 2022. Therefore, the dedicated resource would no longer be available.

In response to questions from the Board, the Head of Regulatory Services commented that the NTE officers were not fully qualified Environmental Health Officers (EHO's) but having used their help officers would going forward, find ways cost effectively, by an intelligence lead approach using the information gathered by the NTE team. Which had highlighted that the service needed a cross cutting priority to focus resource on this important economic area and had also further highlighted the need for a cross team problem-solving approach that would sometimes lead to multi-agency action being required.

With regard to questions on income generation, the Head of Regulatory Services referred to the role of the officer, which partners had agreed to in 2018, to support the delivery of additional income generation via Primary Authority work. Officers in the Technical Services Manager's team, as a centre of excellence; and which they wanted to build upon going forward, would look at other authorities who could not get that level of expertise.

RESOLVED that the Information Report on the work of the Night-Time Economy (NTE) Team be noted and that Members use the contents of the information report in their own reporting back to their respective partner authority.

10/22

PROPOSAL FOR TRANSACTION TRANSFORMATION OF WRS SERVICES

The Head of Regulatory Services sincerely apologised to the Board for the lateness of the Supplementary Agenda Item – Proposal for Transaction Transformation of Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS).

The Head of Regulatory Services drew Members' attention to the Recommendations, as detailed on page 1 of the Supplementary Agenda Pack.

Members were informed that, as detailed in the report, that WRS had been exploring the options to improve the customer experience and enable a smooth customer journey for licence applicants and general service requesters for some time. There was an assumption now that all transactions would be fully e-enabled and on-line payment was the norm in virtually all walks of life, from booking a holiday to paying vehicle excise fees.

Pre-COVID, a group was established to look at this. The group was led by the host's previous S151 officer because one of the potential outcomes was likely to be one partner collecting WRS related income on behalf of all six partners.

Internal audit had repeatedly expressed concerns with Partner Authority income reconciliation against licence records during annual audits. WRS had always responded that this situation could only be addressed by moving to a platform where payments were linked directly to the back-office system records (held in IDOX Uniform). This was not within the gift of the service without changes at individual partners leading towards fuller integration of the payment process with the issuing of licenses.

This idea was resisted in the early days of WRS but in more recent years, officers from the six partner authorities seemed more confident that this would be a suitable way forward, with one partner collecting funds and sending these on at routine intervals to the other partners. The precedent of WRS taking payments on behalf of partner authorities (through the host, Bromsgrove) had already been set with stray dog fees for example, albeit in much lower overall values than income from Licensing.

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The pandemic had taught us that, in terms of the automation of transactions, we were somewhat behind other local authorities across the country, and currently budget a significant spend on the administrative side of the licencing service, where others had moved to a digital first assumption, automating payment and upload of applications to the back office. The WRS Licensing team had made significant changes through the pandemic, moving to a single method of application collection, however, this still required the additional support of printing off the application details and then manually inputting the data into the Uniform database system.

Prior to the pandemic applications would reach WRS through numerous channels, causing delays in them reaching the teams and inevitably impacting service delivery and partner performance indicators, as detailed on page 2 of the Supplementary Agenda Pack.

This had been improved somewhat, with some streamlining of the process due to the pandemic but WRS managers felt that this could go significantly further with some initial investment.

WRS had also previously investigated the use of the website as a channel to receive requests from our customers for environmental health related matters. We currently only had the option of supplying forms that, when submitted, came into the back office as emails for manual inputting into the Uniform database system for processing, allocation, and action. This could significantly delay the customer journey and did little to enhance the service given. Because of this, the service did not encourage this route as a method of engaging with our service.

Last year only 18 requests for service were received following completion of our on-line forms. By contrast, 2,412 environmental health service requests were received by telephone and 7,922 were received by email. This overwhelmingly demonstrated that our customers wished to engage with us through electronic means.

Given the wide adoption of “digital first” policies by the whole local authority sector, making the on-line route the key channel for engaging with services, it seemed at odds with the direction of travel that a group of key service areas that generated significant income streams for the district councils should be left out of this policy approach.

The development of the EU Services Directive before 2010 had led local authorities to be required to offer on-line application processes. Government provided this option through the .GOV website, enabling all

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local authorities to achieve compliance in the timescales required. There were, however, only a limited number of compatible payment engines that linked to this website so as partners moved away from these, the gateway had effectively been closed as a legal route into the service.

At present WRS could only accept applications from two districts via .Gov as the remaining partners no longer had a compatible online payment engine. Officers therefore manually received applications and payments for these applications.

Government was also keen to close the .GOV portal, requiring that local authorities made their own compliant arrangements, to continue with this duty. On-going dialogue indicated that Government's preferred date for final removal would be April 2023. The LGA keeps pressing Government on this, for fear that ultimately the service would be withdrawn leaving local authorities that relied on it, to put in place their own solutions for accepting online applications at their own expense, at a time when the financial environment for local authorities was difficult.

Previously a significant volume of applications had come into WRS through .Gov, mainly relating to the Licensing Act 2003 and other licenses where large scale national operators were involved. E-enabling our own platform would provide a suitable replacement portal to .GOV.

Members' attention was drawn to the 'Proposal'.

There were two elements to the proposal. Firstly, there was the request for investment into a platform that provided the customer the opportunity to raise a service request for environmental health or licensing matters and, to apply and pay online for a licence, permit or registration. The detail of such requests would then be automatically fed into the WRS back-office Uniform system. This would significantly reduce the number of back-office staff and would release officers and free up resources on the administrative and front end of the service.

The second element of this proposal would be to invest in electronic ID cards for the taxi trade. This would enable officers to implement the new Taxi Standards more effectively and tie in with the reporting requirements to record a range of offending, suspensions, and revocations on the national NR3 database system. WRS currently already spent £2.5k on ID cards for the taxi trade but would like to use that current budget plus £22k to now introduce electronic ID cards for them. Electronic ID cards would facilitate immediate checks on identity

and status of drivers, ensuring better protection for the public when officers were out carrying out checks

The Head of Regulatory Services further drew Members' attention to the 'System and Costs' information, and the approximate costings from several suppliers, as detailed on page 4 of the Supplementary Agenda Pack.

The advantage of the "off the peg" solutions was that they come with pre-prepared forms that drop onto your website and would link into the back office with some configuration. Both were both more expensive in terms of initial investment and on-going running costs, but they would give a front end that was stable, used by others and presumably any changes in legislative requirements would be addressed by the supplier in amendments to the product package.

Doing nothing risked the service appearing to have been left behind and did not paint the best picture to potential customers for our income generation work in the absence of an online payment solution for in-house partner activities.

Since all three approaches would require integration with existing systems including host finances, none of the options was cost free in this aspect. Therefore, whilst working with Idox would probably draw more of our in-house resource, it was likely to remain the lowest cost in terms of cash input.

The Head of Regulatory Services continued and in doing so referred to the 'Benefits and risks'; and the assumptions, as fully detailed on pages 5 and 6 of the Supplementary Agenda Pack.

The Head of Regulatory Services highlighted that, should Members decide to take this project forward, that as detailed in the report; that there was potential for the shift to on-line payments to have more impact on particular communities in several districts, so officer members of the Board felt that, whilst in principle there were positives in the proposal, consideration should be given to equality impacts and, if necessary, some form of consultation be undertaken with the relevant traders in the area, particularly the taxi trade.

Members' attention was further drawn to the financial considerations, as detailed on page 6 of the Supplementary Agenda Pack and the 'Options Appraisal' and the 'Timetable for Proposal' as detailed at Appendices 1 and 2 in the report.

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The Head of Regulatory Services further informed the Board, that should they be in agreement with the proposal, that WRS would follow the procurement rules of the Host Authority, Bromsgrove District Council.

The Head of Regulatory Services responded to questions from Board Members with regard to: -

- Electronic ID cards
- Equalities impact
- Liaison with the taxi trade
- Licensing Surgeries / phone help

The Head of Regulatory Services reassured Members that although the group that was initially established to look at this project, pre-covid; that the figures provided, within the report, had been given on several occasions; and that the costings given last year would not significantly increase. Should there be any additional costs, WRS held reserves which would be used to meet those costs. He would reassure the Board that he would do his very best not to come back to partners within the next 12 months for additional funding.

Councillor S. Khan, Redditch Borough Council, expressed his concerns with regard to customers who were less IT literate being able to access services that were available on-line only. Councillor Khan therefore asked if this could be reflected in the Recommendations and that the Recommendations be amended to include the relevant wording.

Councillor Khan was reassured by the Technical Services Manager, that there was no intention of withdrawing Licensing Surgeries or existing phone help for customers.

The Head of Regulatory Services reiterated this and explained that, as detailed in the report; that there was the potential for the shift to on-line payments to have more impact on particular communities in several districts, so Partner Officers of the Board felt that, whilst in principle there were positives in the proposal, consideration should be given to equality impacts and, if necessary, some form of consultation would be undertaken with the relevant traders in the area, particularly the taxi trade.

Having considered the concerns raised by Councillor S. Khan, Redditch Borough Council and on being put to the vote, it was: -

RESOLVED that the Proposal for Transaction of WRS Services report: -

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- (i) be noted;
- (ii) that Members agree in principle to the creation of a reserve, in the amounts outlined in the report;
- (iii) that Members agree that a detailed project plan be produced to be shared with and reviewed by Partner Officers of the Board, with progress reported back to future meetings of the Board; and
- (iv) that while Partner Officers of the Board work together to identify a suitable solution, that they also investigate any potential equalities issues that may arise; ensuring that support continued to be provided to those who required it.

The meeting closed at 5.58 p.m.

Chairman

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WORCESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILS

MEETING OF THE WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES BOARD

THURSDAY, 6TH OCTOBER 2022, AT 4.40 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors T. Rowley (Chairman), S. Cronin (Vice-Chairman), H. J. Jones, P.L. Thomas, J. Raine, B. Nielsen, C. Mitchell (during Minute No's 17/22 and 18/22), D. Morris, L. Whitehouse and J. Thomas (substituting for Councillor N. Martin)

Officers: Mr. S. Wilkes, Mr. P. Carpenter, Mr. R. Keyte, Ms. K. Lahel, Mr. M. Cox, Mr. D. Mellors (via Microsoft Teams) and Mrs. P. Ross

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

The Chairman advised the Board that, having sought advice from the Council's Legal Advisor, having no Member representatives from Redditch Council meant that, under the Board's Service Level Agreement, it was not quorate and therefore any decisions made by the Board would require subsequent ratification at the next meeting of the Board for the decisions to be valid. It was noted however, that Agenda Items 5, 6 and 7 were reports for noting.

12/22

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTES

The following apologies for absence were received:-

Councillors N. Nazir and S. Khan, Redditch Borough Council and N. Martin, Wyre Forest District Council with Councillor J. Thomas, Wyre Forest District Council in attendance as substitute Member.

It was noted that apologies were also received from Mr. I. Miller, Wyre Forest District Council.

13/22

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

14/22

MINUTES

It was agreed that, the minutes of the Board meeting held on Thursday 23rd June 2022, to be taken to the next meeting of the Board.

15/22

WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES REVENUE MONITORING APRIL - JUNE 2022

The Interim S151 officer, Finance, Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) and Redditch Borough Council (RBC), introduced the report and in doing so drew Members' attention to the Recommendations as detailed on pages 15 and 16 of the main agenda report.

The Interim S151 officer, confirmed that the report covered the period April to June 2022.

Members were informed that the detailed revenue report, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report; showed a projected outturn 2022/23 of £5k refund to partners. It was appreciated that this was an estimation to the year-end based on the following assumptions: -

- A 2% pay award had been added to the projected outturn figures but was not included in the April to June 2022 actual figures.
- A number of employees were working on grant funded Covid-19 related work. This incurred agency staff costs due to the backfilling of these employees.
- If April to June 2022 spend on pest control continued on the same trend for the rest of year, there would be an overspend on this service of £6k. WRS officers would continue to monitor and analyse this spend and advise of any changes in the projected outturn figure at quarter 2. The projected outturn figure to be funded by partners was, as follows: -

Wychavon District Council £5k
Bromsgrove District Council £1k

- The following was the actual bereavements costs April to June 2022 to be funded by partners. These costs were charged on an as and when basis. Due to the nature of the charge, it was not possible to project a final outturn figure: -

Bromsgrove District Council £6k
Malvern Hills District Council £4k
Worcester City Council £5k

This income was included in the income projected outturn.

- Appendix 2 to the report, detailed the income achieved by WRS for April to June 2022.
- Any grant funded expenditure was shown separate to the core service costs as this was not funded by the participating Councils.

WRS had budgeted for a 2% pay award in 2022-23. The current proposed pay award was £1,925 per annum on all pay points (pro rata for part time work,) and, if accepted, would create additional pressure on WRS salaries beyond the budgeted amount to the value of £115,756. The Head of Regulatory Services would be discussing this with the officer members of the Board prior to the Boards November's Budget setting meeting, in order to agree how to address the potential shortfall.

In response to a question with regard to Gull Control, the Technical Services Manager, WRS, explained that WRS had built an excellent reputation for the work it did for Worcester City Council on gull control, and that this had led to work for Bath and North-East Somerset Council, who had been struggling with this particular problem.

16/22

ACTIVITY AND PERFORMANCE DATA - QUARTER 1 2022/23

The Head of Regulatory Services presented the Activity and Performance Data for Quarter 1, 2022/2023 and in doing so highlighted the following key points: -

ACTIVITY DATA

The first quarter of 2022/23 saw WRS begin the year with no Covid-19 controls for the first time in two years.

The number of food safety cases recorded during quarter one was a reduction of 4% compared to 2021-22, but an increase of 55% compared to 2020-21. This demonstrated our return to normal activity post-pandemic. Generally, a higher proportion of food safety cases were enquiries such as requests for business advice or export health certificates, but some were complaints about a business. Based on the 144 complaints recorded, 84% related to issues with products purchased from food businesses, whilst 16% related to poor hygiene standards and practices.

A good number of visits were undertaken as WRS worked towards the end of the Food Standards Agency's roadmap in March next year. Of the interventions conducted at businesses included in the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS), 7 were rated as non-compliant (0, 1 or 2) with most of these ratings issued to hospitality businesses.

The number of health and safety cases recorded during quarter one was consistent with 2021-22, but an increase of 42% compared to 2020-21. Again, this reflected the post-pandemic return to normality. Approximately 34% of cases were reports of accidents, with 50% relating to injuries where a worker had been incapacitated for more than seven days and 28% related to injuries to members of the public. The remaining cases were accidents, where major injuries were sustained, dangerous occurrences, and two fatalities. Slips, trips, and falls continued to be the prominent cause of accidents.

The number of stray or lost dogs recorded during quarter one, saw an increase of 18% compared to 2021-22, but an increase of 22% compared to 2020-21. Approximately 72% of cases related to 'contained' stray dogs, which meant that a dog had been found and held, usually by a member of the public. Overall, 68% of contained strays were reunited with their owners. However, figures varied significantly between partner authorities and, of course the others then must be re-homed by the charities that WRS worked with.

Licensing saw a return to normality, and the number of licensing cases recorded during quarter one saw an increase of 17% compared to 2021-22. There were significantly fewer licensing applications recorded two years ago due to Covid-19 restrictions and the closure of many hospitality premises, so we continued to see normality being restored. Approximately two-thirds of cases recorded during quarter one were applications and registrations; with 33% of those relating to temporary events, as hospitality venues began gearing up for the summer period. A further 25% related to private hire or hackney carriage vehicle licences, and 13% related to driver licences.

The number of planning enquiries completed during quarter one saw a reduction of 42% compared to 2021-22, but a reduction of only 4% compared to 2020-21. Approximately 90% of enquiries were consultations, whilst 50% related to contaminated land. Around a fifth of planning enquiries were completed, on a contractual basis, on behalf of other local authorities. Information requests, which often linked into the planning process were also down. However, things were picking up in quarter two.

The number of pollution cases recorded during quarter one saw a reduction of 8% compared to 2021-22, but a reduction of 22% compared to 2020-21. It should be noted that the increased number of cases two years ago coincided with COVID-19 restrictions and a greater number of residents being at home because of lockdown provisions. The totals were in line with seasonal variations. Approximately 75% of cases related to noise nuisances, with noise from domestic properties (such as from dog barking or noise from audio-visual equipment) the most prominent sources. A further 11% of cases related to smoke nuisances and issues such as the burning of domestic or commercial waste. This was very similar to the picture before the pandemic, so again hopefully a picture of returning to normality.

Performance

As always, reporting against the suite of indicators was more limited for the first quarter. The non-business customer measure at 55.6%, was down on the 61.6% figure at year-end last year and the 71% figure in quarter one last year. Although first response time scored, the time taken to deal with the issue, the overall outcome and whether people felt better equipped going forward, did not score well. The number of returns was low, but managers had been asked to investigate these figures. Satisfaction for business customers remained good at 98.7%.

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Managers had been asked to look very closely at the non-business customer measure, as this needed to improve. Due to the nature of the work, you could not always please everyone with the outcome, but this did need to improve.

We also report overall numbers of compliant and non-compliant businesses at this point in the year, without the district breakdown. 98.4% of businesses were graded 3 stars to 5 stars on the hygiene rating scheme.

Compliments outnumber complaints by around 3:1 (30:10) similar to previous years.

Staff sickness was at 0.9 days per FTE, which was slightly above last year's figure for this period of 0.87 but still very similar to the 0.85 days per FTE from the same period in 2019. Another sign that we were back into more normal working.

The Chairman expressed his sincere thanks to officers for an informative report.

Councillor S. Cronin, Worcester City Council, stated that over the last couple of years smaller food premises had had to shed staff and probably hadn't picked up again. His concern was that with fewer staff were some jobs not being carried out on a regular basis. Were officers having to be more proactive in order to ensure that the majority of premises were managing their businesses appropriately?

The Environmental Health & Trading Standards Manager, WRS, responded and in doing so stated that this was a very astute observation, particularly if there were less cleaning staff. However, inspections were the same as pre-Covid-19. Recruiting staff had been difficult for businesses, and officers had noted that cleaning had been a problem; but 98% of businesses inspected still remained compliant.

Officers had carried out a number of 'swabbing' exercises during quarter one and had worked with premises to resolve any issues. Premises were not giving officers any difficulties at the moment.

The Head of Regulatory Services also commented that there had been a fall from high Food Hygiene Rating levels 4 and 5 to level 3. There had been some problems, but not huge; and these businesses had shown confidence to officers that they could manage, so there was no huge concern from officers.

Councillor L. Whitehouse, Wyre Forest District Council, asked a number of questions with regard to the frequency of food safety inspections and also premises displaying incorrect food hygiene ratings; or giving late paperwork as a reason for receiving a downgrading rating on their social media sites.

The Environmental Health & Trading Standards Manager, WRS, commented that Food Standards Agency (FSA), Food and Feed Codes of Practice, set out the frequency of food hygiene inspections; which could range from 6 monthly checks for high risk premises and 5 yearly checks for low risk premises. WRS were audited regularly by the FSA to check that the frequency of inspections were being met.

There was no legal requirement for premises to display their food hygiene ratings at their premises or on-line, but the details were available via the FSA website. Technical Officers did check the ratings being displayed at premises and if they had been downgraded that the correct rating was being displayed. So, officers were being proactive and he had notified the FSA that officers were being proactive in this way. To his knowledge he was not aware of other authorities being as proactive in also carrying out similar checks.

The Head of Regulatory Services further added that officers did not check social media sites and that any premises being downgraded from 5 to 1 food hygiene rating, would be due to a greater issue than late paperwork. Displaying a higher food hygiene rating than you had been awarded, was likely to mislead the consumer; and may constitute an offence under legislation enforced by the County Council's Trading Standards team. This was a risk for businesses that continued to do this, and he would ask Members to contact WRS officers if they were made aware of any businesses displaying an incorrect rating either at their premises or on social media, so that WRS could address this.

The Head of Regulatory Services reassured Members that the vast majority of businesses had 4/5 star ratings, so there was a high number of businesses that scored above 3. Generally, businesses were well run.

Officers further responded to questions with regard to the information provided on Noise, as detailed on pages 43 and 44 of the main agenda report. Officers clarified that page 43 detailed the current year information, 2022/2023.

17/22

UPDATE ON PROGRESS OF THE AUTOMATION PROJECT

The Licensing and Support Services Manager introduced the update report on the Automation progress and in doing so, drew Members' attention to the following: -

At the first meeting of 2022/23, Members agreed to create a reserve of £150,000 from last year's underspend to fund the implementation of automation of data entry for customers, enabling a range of services to be addressed by the client entering data in forms on the WRS website, which would then upload directly into our IDOX Uniform back-office system. This included the automation of payments for Licensing, so, our host authority Bromsgrove District Council would collect fees for the 6 partners authorities and pass money back to the other 5. Officers agreed to provide a short progress report at each Board meeting between then and the actual

implementation of the project.

The Summer holiday period got in the way of a very quick start to the project, but it was now moving forward. Wyre Forest District Council's IT team had been asked to provide project management support, as they hosted IT for WRS.

Calls were made to colleagues in other local authorities and conversations were still on-going to gauge first-hand experience of their journey in this area of work. The mid-Kent shared Licensing service have shared their experience of implementing the Victoria Forms package with IDOX Uniform. This was very informative. We had also had conversations with colleagues at Cheltenham Borough Council, who implemented a bespoke solution with IDOX, again to pass the information directly into their Uniform back-office system. A demonstration from Idox was delivered and a third system offered by Verso had also been viewed. Officers were provided with contacts for authorities where this last solution had been deployed and officers hoped to speak to them soon.

Contact had been made with the Procurement Officer at Bromsgrove District Council as our host authority, to look at the options for engaging with suppliers. There were two Government Procurement portals that offered the suppliers we were interested in. So, these were options that could now be pursued.

In response to questions from Councillor C. Mitchell, Worcester City Council, the Licensing and Support Services Manager stated that, officers were looking at systems that would integrate and would provide the best customer journey, by being input friendly. Officers had engaged with other Councils who had shared their experiences of how customers used the system and how user friendly they were. The customer journey was key, and this was shown by all three suppliers, that customers using their system was a priority.

18/22

INFORMATION REPORT - ENVIRONMENT ACT 2021, AIR QUALITY, AIR QUALITY GRANT SCHEME

The Technical Services Manager introduced the information report and stated that there was a lot happening in the air quality regime. Members were informed that 2022 had proved to be a busy year in terms of air quality and the purpose of this report was to provide Board Members with an update as to the legislative changes and the various work streams currently taking place.

Environment Act 2021

The Act arrived on the statute book in January which hailed 2 significant changes that impacted on WRS work on behalf of its partners.

Part 1 established the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP), which had their head office locally at Worcestershire County Council. The head office would be the new watchdog that oversaw the performance of

all UK regulators including the Government (post Brexit). The focus for Local Authorities (LA's) would be around serious failure to comply with Environmental Law. The OEP was also outward facing in terms of complaints and members of the public could also raise grievances regarding a perceived or suspected breach of environmental legislation.

Part 2 amended the present Local Authority Air Quality Management Regime (LAQM) and broadened the statutory responsibility for delivering air quality improvement in the areas, as detailed on page 59 of the main agenda report.

In terms of statutory reporting a further tightening had been introduced to ensure that authorities adhered to the timeframes (annual status reports, detailed assessments, and declarations of air quality management areas) and their locally set deadlines for air quality action planning. This came with the threat of ministerial directions should respective authorities fail to adhere to DEFRA's progressive deadlines.

Process of AQAP development must be a collaborative process with AQ partners. (County Council, National Highways), all engaging proactively.

WRS had submitted completed Annual Status Reporting for 2022 on schedule during June and had since received positive feedback following DEFRA review for all partners. However, the ministry made observations in relation to the age of the current Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP 2013,) and a recommendation was made that a review would be necessary in the next 12 months.

WRS had acted on this recommendation and had brought together key individuals to form a new county-wide officers' group that would collaborate on developing a new AQAP.

Defra Grant Scheme 2022

As detailed on page 60 of the main agenda report, 2022's grant scheme was split in two halves this year and LOT 2 had provided WRS with the opportunity to bid for funding for this scheme. WRS would be submitting a £276,000 bid to purchase and run 24 monitoring stations for 4 years. This would enable WRS to monitor any successes with work being actively monitored around schools and identified high risk areas. Members were asked to note that log burners were included in air quality.

Members commented that they were pleased to see that a lot was happening in the air quality regime and were delighted to receive the

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information report. Councillor B. Nielsen Malvern Hills District Council briefly quoted the American Medical Journal information with regard to pollution levels being limit of 5 micrograms per cubic metre and the effect on health that this was having.

The Technical Services Officer responded to several questions raised by Board Members; and Board Members raised some concerns with regard to the following: -

- Meeting the World Health Organisation (WHO) guideline limit of 5 micrograms per cubic metre, as the current United Kingdom (UK) was 20 micrograms per cubic metre.
- Where would the Enhanced Monitoring Stations be located.
- Air pollution having a huge contributory factor for the NHS, with lung disease rising.

The Technical Services Manager further informed Members that there had been a positive response from the Steering Group and that the Director of Public Health's team had engaged for a while with his team. He would endeavor to provide the Board with updates at future Board meetings.

Monitoring would take place across the County but would focus initially where there were bigger issues and currently Worcester City had poor quality issues; areas of deprivation would also be included. To go beyond the Environment Act 2021 could prove difficult, but we were required to do certain things. If a partner authority required something more specific, they could talk to WRS officers, but this would be dependent on funding and staffing levels allowing additional work to be carried out.

In response to further questions from Members with regard to what powers and how these could be imposed by local authorities; the Technical Services Manager, WRS, drew Members' attention to Part 2 of the Environment Act 2021, as detailed on page 59 of the main agenda report.

The Technical Services Manager, WRS, responded to further questions with regards to congestion and problem areas (e.g. removing buses or closing car parks); Members asked how radical could solutions be?

Members were informed that it would be a case of looking at monitoring and going back to the science and the data obtained; then try and solve the issues with single / multi actions.

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The Head of Regulatory Services reiterated that officers were working well with their county council colleagues and that it was important that these requirements were taken forward in a spirit of partnership working. With the new regime under the new Act and with a new agency in the Office for Environmental Protection, officers would not know how the whole thing would work until the Agency took on some of the challenges it would face. Given the new Agency was supposed to hold bodies to account, how it would consider the difficult financial environment faced by local authorities was something yet to be understood.

The meeting closed at 5.38 p.m.

Chairman

Worcestershire Regulatory Services

Supporting and protecting you

WRS Board: 17th November 2022

Board Papers from 6th October

Recommendation	<p>That members:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. note this report, and2. Approve the minutes of the meeting of 23rd June 2022, contained in the background papers,3. Note the relevant recommendations in each of the reports attached as the background to this paper
Report	<p>Members will recall that the scheduled meeting of the Board on 6th October was not quorate due to unforeseen circumstances impacting on one Board member, which meant that one partner was not represented. Having discussed options with the Legal Advisor and Head of Regulatory Services, the Chair determined that the meeting would go ahead to avoid wasted journeys, noting that no papers on the agenda required a formal vote for decision; all were simply for noting. Members who were present were able to questions officers on the papers and a broad ranging discussion of the issues raised occurred.</p> <p>In order to address what is effectively outstanding business, this paper introduces those previously scheduled papers as background documents so that they can formally be noted and that the minutes of the previous meeting on 23rd June 2022 can be formally agreed.</p> <p>Taking this approach will provide an opportunity to cover any matters arising whilst, particularly for Board members not present, whilst helping to limit the impact on members' valuable time that could result from tabling papers individually.</p>
Contact Point	<p>Simon Wilkes Head of Regulatory Services Email: simon.wilkes@worcsregservices.gov.uk Tel: 01562 738088</p>
Background Papers	<p>Papers scheduled for meeting on 6th October that was not quorate.</p>



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WRS Board 17th November 2022

WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES REVENUE MONITORING April – Sept 2022

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board:

- 1.1 Note the final financial position for the period April – Sept 2022
- 1.2 That partner councils are informed of their liabilities for 2022-23 in relation to Pest Control

Council	Projected Outturn for Pest Control £000
Redditch Borough Council	6
Wychavon District Council	7
Worcester City Council	1
Total	14

- 1.3 That partner councils are informed of their liabilities for 2022-23 in relation to Bereavements

Council	Apr–Sept 22 Actual for Bereavements £000
Bromsgrove District Council	8
Malvern Hills District Council	4
Redditch Borough Council	2

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Worcester City Council	6
Total	20

1.4 That partner councils are informed of their liabilities for 2022-23 in relation to three additional Technical Officers

Council	Estimated Projected Outturn 2022/23 Tech Officer Income Generation £000	Estimated Projected Outturn 2022/23 Tech Officer Animal Activity £000	Estimated Projected Outturn 2022/23 Gull Control £000
Redditch Borough Council	6	2	
Malvern Hills District Council	4	7	
Worcester City Council	5	2	70
Bromsgrove District Council	5	8	
Wychavon District Council	8	13	
Wyre Forest District Council	5	8	
Total	33	40	70

1.5 Approve the additional partner liabilities for 2022/23 in relation to the additional increase in pay award and recommend the increase to individual partner councils:-

Council	£000
Bromsgrove District Council	17
Malvern Hills District Council	15
Redditch Borough Council	20
Worcester City Council	19
Wychavon District Council	27

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Wyre Forest District Council	18
Total	116

1.6 Approve additional partner liabilities for 2022/23 in relation to the additional increase in hosting cost in Wyre Forest and Bromsgrove relating to ICT, accommodation and support staffing costs and recommend the increase to individual partner councils:-

Council	2022/23 Increase in Rent £000	2022/23 Increase in ICT Hosting £000	2022/23 Increase in Support Hosting £000
Bromsgrove District Council	0.8	0.4	0.7
Malvern Hills District Council	0.7	0.4	0.6
Redditch Borough Council	1.0	0.5	0.9
Worcester City Council	0.9	0.5	0.8
Wychavon District Council	1.3	0.7	1.2
Wyre Forest District Council	.8	0.5	0.8
Total	5.5	3.0	5.0

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 – Sept 2022.

Background

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

Report

The following reports are included for Joint Board's Attention:

- Revenue Monitoring - April – Sept 22 – Appendix 1
- Income Breakdown - April – Sept 22 – Appendix 2

Revenue Monitoring

The detailed revenue report is attached at Appendix 1.. This shows a projected outturn 2022/23 of £1k refund to partners. It is appreciated this is an estimation to the year end based on following assumptions:-

- A 2% pay award has been added to the April to Sept Actual & projected outturn figures.
- Agency staff costs are being incurred due to backfilling of staff working on grant funded work & other contractual work eg food recovery programme, contaminated land.
- If April to Sept 22 spend on pest control continues on the same trend for the rest of year, there will be a overspend on this service of £14k. WRS officers will continue to monitor and analyse this spend and advise of any changes in the projected outturn figure at quarter 3. The projected outturn figure to be funded by partners is:-

Redditch Borough Council	£6k
Wychavon District Council	£7k
Worcester City Council	£1k

This income is included in the income projected outturn.

- The following is the actual bereavements costs Apr – Sept 22 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	£8k
Malvern Hills District Council	£4k
Redditch Borough Council	£2k
Worcester City Council	£6k

This income is included in the income projected outturn.



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- Appendix 2 shows the detail of the income achieved by WRS April – Sept 22
- Any grant funded expenditure is shown separate to the core service costs as this is not funded by the participating Councils.
- WRS budgeted for a 2% pay award in 2022-23. The current proposed pay award of £1,925 per annum on all pay points (pro rata for part time work) as now been accepted by employers and unions, the additional pressure on WRS salaries will be £115,757. WRS are unable to cover this increase, therefore an increase to partner funding will be required of:-

Council	2022/23
	£
Bromsgrove District Council	16,843
Malvern Hills District Council	15,083
Redditch Borough Council	20,292
Worcester City Council	19,146
Wychavon District Council	26,902
Wyre Forest District Council	17,491
Total	115,757

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- When hosting charges was set in November 2021 it was impossible to anticipate the level of cost increases faced by local authorities in terms of pay award, utility costs and the wider impact of high inflation. In order to avoid placing a significant burden on hosting authorities in year, members are asked to agree to the following increases in hosting charges below:-

Council	2022/23 Increase in Rent £	2022/23 Increase in ICT Hosting £	2022/23 Increase in Support Hosting £
Bromsgrove District Council	811	434	728
Malvern Hills District Council	725	388	651
Redditch Borough Council	977	522	877
Worcester City Council	921	493	827
Wychavon District Council	1,294	692	1,162
Wyre Forest District Council	842	450	756
Total	5,570	2,980	5,000

Because the quarter 2 revenue monitoring information required to complete the QRO's has been sent to partner councils, we are unable to amend the April – Sept reports. If agreed these changes will reflect in quarter 3 revenue monitoring reports.

Financial Implications

None other than those stated in the report

Sustainability

None as a direct result of this report

Contact Points

Peter Carpenter – peter.carpenter@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk



Background Papers

Detailed financial business case

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WRS - Profit & Loss Report 2022/23

Total WRS Sept 22 / Period 6 - 22/23

Appendix 1

	Revised Full Year Budget 22-23	Revised Budget - Committed Apr - Sept 22	Expenditure Apr - Sept 22	Variance	Qtr 2 Projected outturn	Qtr 2 Projected Outturn Variance	Comments
	£	£	£	£	£	£	
Direct Expenditure							
Employees							
Salary	3,048	1,510	1,432	-78	3,019	-29	Saving due to employees working of comf grant working work.
Agency Staff	25	0	148	148	256	231	Due to backfilling of staff working on grant funded work & other contractual work eg Food recovery programme, contaminated land
Employee Insurance	25	12	12	0	25	0	
Sub-Total - Employees	3,098	1,522	1,592	70	3,299	201	
Premises							
Rent / Hire of Premise	61	31	30	-0	61	0	Includes £59k Accommodation recharge
Cleaning	1	0	1	0	1	0	
Utilities	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Sub-Total - Premises	62	31	31	-0	62	0	
Transport							
Vehicle Hire	13	6	2	-4	13	0	
Vehicle Fuel	8	4	0	-4	4	-4	
Road Fund Tax	1	1	1	0	1	0	
Vehicle Insurance	5	2	2	0	5	0	
Vehicle Maintenance	3	2	1	-0	3	0	
Car Allowances	75	37	21	-16	56	-19	Staff working patterns changed
Sub-Total - Transport	104	52	27	-24	82	-23	
Supplies and Services							
Furniture & Equipment	32	16	20	4	42	11	Essential calibrations
Clothes, uniforms and laundry	2	1	0	-1	2	0	
Printing & Photocopying	17	9	12	3	21	3	
Postage	11	6	6	1	11	0	
ICT	55	28	32	5	65	10	Additional office 365 licences for temp staff
Telephones	21	11	8	-3	19	-2	
Training & Seminars	23	11	5	-6	22	-0	
Insurance	20	10	10	0	20	0	
Third Party Payments	170	85	85	-0	170	0	Bromsgrove Hosting Charges of £110k and ICT Hosting Charges of £59.5k
Sub-Total - Supplies & Service	349	175	178	3	371	22	
Contractors							
Dog Warden	121	61	57	-4	114	-8	
Pest Control	103	51	70	19	117	14	Recovered in income
Taxi / Alcohol / & Other Licensing	70	35	17	-18	63	-7	
Other contractors/consultants	3	1	0	-1	2	-1	
Water Safety	5	2	3	1	6	1	
Food Safety	1	1	0	-1	1	0	
Environmental Protection	12	6	25	19	31	20	Bereavements recovered in income
Grants / Subscriptions	13	6	9	2	20	7	
Advertising, Publicity and Promotion	6	3	5	2	15	9	Fees & charges licensing increase 23-24
Sub-Total	332	166	186	20	367	35	
Income							
Training Courses / Bereavement / Works in Default / Sewer Baiting etc	-543	-257	-406	-149	-780	-237	Additional contract for Planning Enforcement £104k and Ukrainian work £85k
Sub-Total	-543	-257	-406	-149	-780	-237	
Overall Total	3,403	1,688	1,609	-79	3,402	-1	

Notes:-

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Worcestershire Regulatory Services Income 2022/23

Income from Partners	April to Sept 22
	£
Budget	1,688,915
Pension Backfunding	14,600
Bereavement / Public Burials	19,844
Pest Control Overspend - Bromsgrove, Malvern, Wychavon & Redditch	6,565
Employee for Animal Activity - Apr - Sept 22	19,425
Employee for Income Generation - Apr - Sept 22	15,996
Employee for Additional Gull Work - Apr - Sept 22 - Worcs City	56,303
Ukrainian Work - Malvern, Wychavon, Bromsgrove & Redditch	40,409
	1,862,057
	1,862,057
Grant Income	
Severn Trent - Sewer Baiting	3,800
	3,800
	3,800
Other Income	
Stray Dog Income	20,988
Worcester County - Mgmt, Legal & Admin Support	26,600
Worcester County - Safety at Sports Grounds	10,000
Worcester County - Petroleum Work	10,584
Planning Support Work	55,999
Contaminated Land Work	29,058
PPC Work	1,866
Primary Authority work	2,551
Pest Control - Bath & North East Somerset Council	9,054
Private Water Supplies	2,500
FSA - Funding Award Prioritisation	8,118
Training / Risk Assessments of Water Supplies / Burials etc	
Vet Fee Inspection Costs Recovered	11,322
Licensing - Pre-App Advice	1,028
Food Training Courses / Certificates / Food Hygiene Rating / Pre-Opening	5,818
Support for Comf Grant Funded Work	33,234
	228,720
	228,720
Total Income Apr - Sept 22	2,094,577
	2,094,577
2022/23 Base Budget from Partners	-1,688,915
Total Income Excluding Budget	405,662

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WRS Board 17th November 2022

WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICE BUDGETS 2023/24 – 2025/26

Recommendation

It is recommended that the WRS Board:

- 1.1 Approve the 2023/24 gross expenditure budget of £4,288k as shown in Appendix 1.
- 1.2 Approve the 2023/24 income budget of £781k as shown in Appendix 1.
- 1.3 Approve the revenue budget and partner percentage allocations for 23/24 onwards:

Council	£'000	Revised %
Bromsgrove District Council	510	14.52
Malvern Hills District Council	457	13.00
Redditch Borough Council	615	17.49
Worcester City Council	580	16.72
Wychavon District	815	23.19
Wyre Forest District Council	530	15.08
Total	3,507	

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1.4 Approve the additional partner liabilities for 2023/24 in relation to unavoidable salary pressure.

Council	£'000
Bromsgrove District Council	12
Malvern Hills District Council	11
Redditch Borough Council	14
Worcester City Council	14
Wychavon District Council	19
Wyre Forest District Council	12
Total	82

1.5 Approve the additional partner liabilities for 2023/24 in relation to increase in hosting costs.

Council	Increase in Rent £000	Increase in ICT Hosting £000	Increase in Support Hosting £000
Bromsgrove District Council	1	1	1
Malvern Hills District Council	1	1	1
Redditch Borough Council	2	1	2
Worcester City Council	1	1	1
Wychavon District Council	2	1	2
Wyre Forest District Council	1	1	1
Total	8	7	8

1.6 Approve the additional partner liabilities for 2023/24 in relation to three Technical Officers.

Council	Tech Officer Income Generation £000	Tech Officer Animal Activity £000	Tech Officer Gull Control £000
Bromsgrove District Council	5	7	
Malvern Hills District Council	5	13	
Redditch Borough Council	6	2	
Worcester City Council	6	3	65
Wychavon District Council	8	11	
Wyre Forest District Council	6	5	
Total	36	41	65

Introduction/Summary

The production of a robust budget position enables partners and the service to manage the financial position of the organisation.

Report

This report presents the revenue budget for 2023/24 – 2025/26 in relation to Worcestershire Regulatory Services.

The following elements are included in this report for WRS Board Member’s Attention:

- WRS Financial Plan 2023/24 – 2025/26 – Appendix 1
- WRS Partner Contributions Breakdown 2023/24 – 2025/26 – Appendix 2
- WRS Income Budget Breakdown 2023/24 – Appendix 3

WRS Budgets 2023/24

Appendix 1 shows the 2023-24 – 2025/26 budget breakdown for the district councils’ partnership.

The following assumptions have been made in relation to the projections:

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- The base budget has been adjusted to include the increase of £116k created by the higher than expected pay award in 2022-23 and also the increase in hosting and support charges of £13.5k
- 2% pay award across all staff for 2023/24 – 2025/26. This will be subject to the National Pay Negotiations that are ongoing and therefore the final position will reflect any formally agreed increases, the budget also includes any employee entitled to an incremental increase.
- Increase in Rent of £7.7k
- Increase in ICT Hosting of £7.5k
- Increase in Support Hosting of £8.6k in 2023-24 and a further 2% in 2024-25 and 2025-26
- Total partner contribution as included in Appendix 2
- Income projections as included at Appendix 3.
- No inflationary increases in supplies and services or transport.
- Pension back-funding will be paid by all partners.

The unavoidable salary pressures are not able to be met by WRS making additional income, therefore, an increase to partner funding will be required of:

Council	2023/24	2024/25 - Cumulative	2025/26 - Cumulative
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Bromsgrove District Council	12	23	34
Malvern Hills District Council	11	21	31
Redditch Borough Council	14	28	41
Worcester City Council	14	27	40
Wychavon District Council	19	37	54
Wyre Forest District Council	12	24	35
Total	82	160	235

In the Autumn of 2021, when the Officer members of the Board reached agreement on the increase in hosting charges for Wyre Forest and Bromsgrove for 2022/23, no one could have anticipated the extent of the inflationary pressures currently being experienced by all councils. Inflation being in double figures was not yet talked about. The scale of the sharp increases in energy costs had not yet become apparent and a national pay settlement for 2022/3 that adds around 7% on average was well beyond what was anticipated. Whilst the pay award clearly impacts directly on staff employed for WRS purposes, it also impacts those staff based in the host authorities that provide supporting roles. These impacts,

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along with the anticipated impacts that will hit us in 2023/4, need to be reflected realistically in setting the budget for hosting next year.

IT suppliers are also experiencing increased financial pressures that many are passing these on to users. Software license charges are increasing significantly, which means a significant impact on our modern, digitally enabled services. All officers in local authorities are reliant on IT kit and software for their flexible work patterns and the cost of these provisions are increasing and will increase further looking forward. Utilities costs continue to rise and must be factored into the accommodation charges that the hosting provider faces.

These pressures are not able to be met by WRS, therefore, an increase to partner funding will be required of:

Council	2023/24 Increase in Rent	2023/24 Increase in ICT Hosting	2023/24 Increase in Support Hosting
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Bromsgrove District Council	1	1	1
Malvern Hills District Council	1	1	1
Redditch Borough Council	2	1	2
Worcester City Council	1	1	1
Wychavon District Council	2	1	2
Wyre Forest District Council	1	1	1
Total	8	7	8

In addition to the base budget there are three additional technical officers working on income generation, animal activity and gull control. We are unable to include these officers into the base budget as the income generation officer is an additional post on the establishment to bring in additional income agreed by partner councils and the animal activity and gull control officer recharge percentage basis is different to the agreed partner recharge allocations.

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- Below are the Pension back-funding figures to be paid by partners.

Council	Pension Back Funding 2023-24 £000	Pension Back Funding 2024-25 £000	Pension Back Funding 2025-26 £000
Bromsgrove District Council	5	5	5
Malvern Hills District Council	5	5	5
Redditch Borough Council	6	6	6
Worcester City Council	6	6	6
Wychavon District Council	8	8	8
Wyre Forest District Council	6	6	6
Total	36	36	36

Financial Implications

None other than those stated in the report

Sustainability

None as a direct result of this paper

Contact point

Peter Carpenter – peter.carpenter@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk

Background Papers

Detailed financial business case

Account description	Revised Budget	Budget	Budget	Budget
	2022 / 2023	2023 / 2024	2024 / 2025	2025 / 2026
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Employees				
Monthly salaries	3,130	3,364	3,448	3,530
Training for professional qualifications	0	0	0	0
Medical fees (employees')	2	2	2	2
Employers' liability insurance	25	25	25	25
Employees' professional subscriptions	2	2	2	2
Sub-Total - Employees	3,159	3,393	3,477	3,559
Premises				
Rents	65	72	72	72
Room hire	2	2	2	2
Trade Waste	1	1	1	1
Sub-Total - Premises	67	75	75	75
Transport				
Vehicle repairs/maint'ce	3	3	3	3
Diesel fuel	8	8	8	8
Licences	1	1	1	1
Contract hire of vehicles	4	4	4	4
Vehicle insurances	5	5	5	5
Van Lease	9	9	9	9
Fares & Car Parking	5	5	5	5
Car allowances	70	58	58	58
Sub-Total - Transport	105	93	93	93
Supplies & Service				
Equipment - purchase/maintenance/rental	22	30	30	30
Materials	9	9	9	9
Clothing, uniforms & laundry	2	2	2	2
Training fees	23	23	23	23
General insurances	19	19	19	19
Printing and stationery	17	17	17	17
Books and publications	2	2	2	2
Postage/packaging	11	11	11	11
ICT	55	67	67	67
Telephones	21	21	21	21
Taxi Tests	22	22	22	22
CRB Checks (taxi)	26	26	26	26
Support service recharges	115	124	126	129
Support service recharges - ICT	63	70	70	70
Sub-Total - Supplies & Service	405	441	443	446

	Budget 2022 / 2023 £000's	Budget 2023 / 2024 £000's	Budget 2024 / 2025 £000's	Budget 2025 / 2026 £000's
Contractors				
Consultants / Contractors' fees/charges/SLA's	266	269	234	234
Advertising (general)	5	5	5	5
Grants and subscriptions	13	13	13	13
Sub-Total - Contractors	284	287	252	252
Income				
Grants / Primary Authority / Food Training / Contaminated Land	-372	-525	-529	-534
Funding approved for unavoidable Salary Pressures				
Sub-Total - Income	-372	-525	-529	-534
Income				
Funding from partners for Technical Officers	-141	-143	-110	-112
Funding from Worcs City Council for Pest Control		-8	-8	-8
Funding from partners for Increase in Rent		-8	-8	-8
Funding from partners for Increase in ICT		-8	-8	-8
Funding from partners for Increase in Hosting Charges		-9	-11	-13
Sub-Total - Income	-141	-174	-143	-148
Additional Income				
Income to be found due to unavoidable salary pressures		-82	-160	-235
Sub-Total - Income	0	-82	-160	-235
DISTRICT PARTNERSHIP BUDGET	3,507	3,507	3,507	3,507
23-24 Partner Percentages				
Bromsgrove District Council	14.52%			
Malden Hills District Council	13.00%			
Redditch Borough Council	17.49%			
Worcester City Council	16.72%			
Wycheavon District Council	23.19%			
Wyre Forest District Council	15.08%			
Total	100.00%			

	Budget	Contribution Pest Control	Contribution Technical Officers	Partner Contribution	Contribution Increase in Rent, ICT & Hosting Charges	Unavoidable Salary Pressures	Total Partner Contribution
	2023 / 2024 £000's	2023 / 2024 £000's	2023 / 2024 £000's	2023 / 2024 £000's	2023 / 2024 £000's	2023 / 2024 £000's	2023 / 2024 £000's
Budget 2023 / 24							
Bromsgrove District Council	510		12	523	3	12	538
Malvern Hills District Council	457		18	474	3	11	488
Redditch Borough Council	615		8	623	4	14	642
Worcester City Council	580	8	75	662	4	14	680
Wychavon District Council	815		19	834	6	19	859
Wyre Forest District Council	530		11	541	4	12	556
Total	3,507	8	143	3,658	24	82	3,764

	Budget	Contribution Pest Control	Contribution Technical Officers	Partner Contribution	Contribution Increase in Rent, ICT & Hosting Charges	Unavoidable Salary Pressures	Total Partner Contribution
	2024 / 2025 £000's	2024 / 2025 £000's	2024 / 2025 £000's	2024 / 2025 £000's	2024 / 2025 £000's	2024 / 2025 £000's	2024 / 2025 £000's
Budget 2024 / 25							
Bromsgrove District Council	510		13	523	4	23	550
Malvern Hills District Council	457		18	475	3	21	499
Redditch Borough Council	615		9	624	5	28	656
Worcester City Council	580	8	40	627	4	27	659
Wychavon District Council	815		20	835	6	37	878
Wyre Forest District Council	530		11	541	4	24	569
Total	3,507	8	110	3,625	26	160	3,811

	Budget	Contribution Pest Control	Contribution Technical Officers	Partner Contribution	Contribution Increase in Rent, ICT & Hosting Charges	Unavoidable Salary Pressures	Total Partner Contribution
	2025 / 2026 £000's	2025 / 2026 £000's	2025 / 2026 £000's	2025 / 2026 £000's	2025 / 2026 £000's	2025 / 2026 £000's	2025 / 2026 £000's
Budget 2025 / 26							
Bromsgrove District Council	510		13	523	4	34	562
Malvern Hills District Council	457		18	475	4	31	510
Redditch Borough Council	615		9	624	5	41	670
Worcester City Council	580	8	40	627	5	40	672
Wychavon District Council	815		20	835	7	54	896
Wyre Forest District Council	530		11	541	4	35	581
Total	3,507	8	112	3,626	29	235	3,890

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Council	Revised WRS Budget 23-24 with Additional Pay Award Contribution and Increase in Hosting charges	Pest Control	Tech Officer Income Generation	Tech Officer Animal Activity	Tech Officer Gull Control	Increase in Rent	Increase in ICT Support	Increase in Hosting Charges	Unavoidable Salary Pressures	Total Partner Contribution 23-24
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Bromsgrove District Council	510,350		5,276	7,207		1,125	1,089	1,252	11,926	538,226
Malvern Hills District Council	456,788		4,722	12,833		1,007	975	1,121	10,674	488,120
Redditch Borough Council	614,898		6,356	2,110		1,356	1,312	1,509	14,369	641,909
Worcester City Council	580,103	7,500	6,074	3,164	65,300	1,295	1,254	1,442	13,732	679,864
Wychavon District Council	814,948		8,424	11,075		1,797	1,739	2,000	19,044	859,026
Wyre Forest District Council	530,049		5,479	5,098		1,168	1,131	1,301	12,386	556,612
Total	3,507,136	7,500	36,331	41,487	65,300	7,748	7,498	8,625	82,131	3,763,756

Council	Revised WRS Budget 23-24 with Additional Pay Award Contribution and Increase in Hosting charges	Pest Control	Tech Officer Income Generation	Tech Officer Animal Activity	Tech Officer Gull Control	Increase in Rent	Increase in ICT Support	Increase in Hosting Charges	23-24 Unavoidable Salary Pressures	24-25 Unavoidable Salary Pressures	Total Partner Contribution 24-25
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Bromsgrove District Council	510,350		5,487	7,356		1,125	1,089	1,611	11,926	11,315	550,260
Malvern Hills District Council	456,788		4,912	13,097		1,007	975	1,442	10,674	10,127	499,022
Redditch Borough Council	614,898		6,612	2,153		1,356	1,312	1,942	14,369	13,633	656,274
Worcester City Council	580,103	7,500	6,319	3,229	30,000	1,295	1,254	1,855	13,732	13,028	658,315
Wychavon District Council	814,948		8,763	11,303		1,797	1,739	2,573	19,044	18,068	878,234
Wyre Forest District Council	530,049		5,700	5,203		1,168	1,131	1,674	12,386	11,752	569,063
Total	3,507,136	7,500	37,793	42,341	30,000	7,748	7,498	11,098	82,131	77,923	3,811,168

Council	Revised WRS Budget 23-24 with Additional Pay Award Contribution and Increase in Hosting charges	Pest Control	Tech Officer Income Generation	Tech Officer Animal Activity	Tech Officer Gull Control	Increase in Rent	Increase in ICT Support	Increase in Hosting Charges	23-24 Unavoidable Salary Pressures	24-25 Unavoidable Salary Pressures	25-26 Unavoidable Salary Pressures	Total Partner Contribution 25-26
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Bromsgrove District Council	510,350		5,602	7,507		1,125	1,089	1,978	11,926	11,315	10,826	561,718
Malvern Hills District Council	456,788		5,013	13,367		1,007	975	1,770	10,674	10,127	9,689	509,410
Redditch Borough Council	614,898		6,748	2,197		1,356	1,312	2,383	14,369	13,633	13,043	669,938
Worcester City Council	580,103	7,500	6,449	3,296	30,000	1,295	1,254	2,277	13,732	13,028	12,465	671,399
Wychavon District Council	814,948		8,944	11,536		1,797	1,739	3,158	19,044	18,068	17,287	896,520
Wyre Forest District Council	530,049		5,817	5,310		1,168	1,131	2,054	12,386	11,752	11,243	580,910
Total	3,507,136	7,500	38,573	43,213	30,000	7,748	7,498	13,619	82,131	77,923	74,553	3,889,894

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Worcestershire Regulatory Services Budgeted Income 2023/24

Appendix 3

Grant Income

	£
Severn Trent - Sewer Baiting	14,000
	<u>14,000</u>

Partner Funded Income

Employee - Income Generation	36,331
Employee - Additional Gull Work - Worcs City only	65,300
Employee - Animal Activity	41,487
Pest Control Service - Worcester City only	7,500
Increase in Rent	7,748
Increase in ICT Hosting	7,498
Increase in Support Hosting	8,625
Unavoidable Salary Pressures	82,130
Total Partner Funded income	<u>256,619</u>

Other Income

Stray Dog Income	50,000
County - Mgmt / Admin / Legal etc	54,000
County - Petroleum Work / Safety at Sports Grounds	41,000
Education Case Work	6,000
Animal Re-Rating / Transcription Work	975
Contaminated Land Work / Planning Support work	266,998
Primary Authority work	37,554
Vet Fee Inspection Costs Recovered	20,000
Training	2,000
Health Certificates / Food Hygiene Re-Rating	20,000
Licensing - Pre-App Advice	6,000
Business - Pre-Opening Advice	6,000
Total Other income	<u>510,527</u>

781,146

Total Income

Worcestershire Regulatory Services

Supporting and protecting you

WRS Board

Date: 17th November 2022

Title: Activity and Performance Data Quarter 2 2022/23

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 second quarter of 2022/23, but the actual data allows comparison with previous quarters and previous years.

Contribution to Priorities

Board members have asked the service to provide data on activity levels to help reassure local members that WRS continues to address a range of issues in each partner area and more broadly across the county.

Report

Activity Data

The second quarter of 2022/23 saw us having our first real summer post Covid pandemic. Businesses were working towards individual recovery, and many people were looking forward to a Summer of normality, which as we now know, featured record-breaking temperatures and many hours of sunshine.

The service continued to follow the FSA roadmap to normal delivery of food interventions through quarter 2, with a significant volume of interventions delivered. Many of these were done by agency staff, taken on using backfilling funding from the Covid grant and monies allocated by Board for this purpose.

The number of food safety cases recorded by WRS during the year to date is a reduction of 28% compared to 2021-22, but an increase of 18% compared to 2020-21. In general terms, a higher proportion of food safety

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cases are enquiries such as requests for business advice or export health certificates. Based on the 278 complaints recorded, 75% have related to issues with products purchased from food businesses, whilst 25% have related to poor hygiene standards and practices.

Of the interventions conducted at businesses included in the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS), 39 were rated as non-compliant (0, 1 or 2) with most of these ratings issued to takeaways, restaurants, and small retailers.

The number of health and safety cases recorded by WRS during the year to date is a reduction of 16% compared to 2021-22, but an increase of 19% compared to 2020-21. Approximately 39% of cases were reports of accidents, with 45% relating to injuries where a worker was incapacitated for more than seven days and 32% relating to injuries to members of the public. The remaining cases were accidents, where major injuries were sustained, or where dangerous occurrences featured, plus two fatalities. Slips, trips, and falls continues to be the prominent cause of accidents.

The number of licensing cases recorded by WRS during the year to date is an increase of 10% compared to 2021-22, but an increase of 36% compared to 2020-21. It should be noted that there were significantly fewer licensing applications recorded two years ago due to COVID restrictions and the closure of many hospitality premises. Approximately 68% of cases have been applications and registrations; with 30% relating to temporary events, 27% relating to private hire or hackney carriage vehicle licences, and 14% relating to driver licences. The high levels of temporary events is a feature of the summer, reinforced by hospitality businesses rebuilding post-pandemic.

WRS tends to receive a higher number of enquiries about licensing matters than complaints about licensed or unlicensed activity. Based on the 292 complaints recorded, 33% have related to taxi licensing, 29% to alcohol licensing, and 20% to animal licensing.

Quarter 2 saw the fall in numbers of planning enquiries begin to plateau out but, the number of planning enquiries completed during the year to date is still a reduction of 36% compared to 2021-22, and a reduction of 17% compared to 2020-21. Approximately 89% of enquiries have been consultations, whilst 53% have related to contaminated land. Around 17% of enquiries have been completed, on a contractual basis, on behalf of other local authorities.

Interestingly, the number of information requests, which are often linked to the planning system, grew during quarter 2, so we may see an increase in planning work to follow this. Having said that, officers report feeling that the

number of general FOI requests has been higher over the summer than they have experienced in some years.

The number of stray or lost dogs recorded by WRS continued to increase through quarter 2. During the year to date, WRS has seen an increase of 24% compared to 2021-22, but an increase of 21% compared to 2020-21. Approximately 70% of recorded cases related to 'contained' stray dogs, which means that a dog was found and held by, for example, a member of the public. Overall, 67% of contained strays were reunited with their owners, however, figures vary significantly between local authorities.

In general terms, WRS receives a relatively low number of dog control complaints. Based on the 45 complaints recorded, 25 have related to fouling and persistent straying, 12 have related to dangerous dogs, and have related to welfare concerns.

The service had its usual very busy summer with the number of pollution cases recorded during the year to date representing a reduction of 8% compared to 2021-22, but a reduction of 12% compared to 2020-21. It should be noted that the increased number of cases two years ago coincides with COVID-19 restrictions and a greater number of residents being at home. It also should be noted that totals are in line with seasonal variations.

Approximately 71% of recorded cases related to noise nuisances, with noise from domestic properties (such as from dog barking or noise from audio-visual equipment) being the most prominent sources. A further 11% of recorded cases related to smoke nuisances and issues such as the burning of domestic or commercial waste.

The number of public health cases recorded by WRS during the year to date is a reduction of 30% compared to 2021-22, but a reduction of 35% compared to 2020-21. Approximately 66% of cases have related to pest control, whether enquiries about domestic treatments and sewer baiting, or complaints about pest control issues caused by the activity of neighbouring residents or businesses. A further 27% of cases have been complaints relating to accumulations at domestic properties which can also include pest control issues.

Of the 351 domestic treatments undertaken, approximately 53% have been due to issues with rats, 22% have been due to issues with wasps, and 35% have been due to pests at properties within the Wychavon district.

Performance

The non-business customer measure has slipped slightly to 54.1% from

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55.6% last quarter and remains well below last year's out-turn figure. Heavy demands on resourcing in Community Environmental Health over the Summer meant we struggled to keep on top of nuisance complaints and often had a long list of work waiting to be addressed in spite of using our temporary Regulatory Support Officers to triage complaints to identify them most serious ones. Hence, many people were less happy about the time taken to respond and the time taken to get to any kind of resolution. Only half found our interventions helpful and we were unable to resolve issues to the satisfaction of many.

During quarter 2 we also experimented again with trying to get satisfaction figures electronically by asking people for comments by email. As with last time, this led to a significantly smaller number of responses, which generally means that those unhappy are more strongly represented in the replies. Managers are looking at ways to boost response numbers and the declining backlog of nuisance work will result in better response times.

At the time, Officers did explain the reasons for delays but clearly this has had a negative impact on perceptions of the service. Likewise, numbers who felt better equipped to deal with future issues was also down at 45.9%%.

Business customer satisfaction remains good at 98.6%.

Overall numbers of compliant and non-compliant food businesses were at 98.2% and 1.8% respectively. This remains good and on a par with previous years. As we work through the Food Standards Agency recovery plan, we are seeing some falls in Food Hygiene ratings but thankfully very few businesses drop into the 0-2 range which indicates a risk of producing unsafe food.

Generally, compliments outnumber complaints by around 2 to 1, slightly less than we would expect to see. Again, this may be a victim of getting fewer returns for satisfaction surveys as many compliments come from these, particularly the business ones. This quarter most complaints related to issues with our handling of noise issues, either that things were not resolved, or the time being taken. This matches up with the picture from the satisfaction figures. One related to someone unhappy at having their dog seized and another related to our officer misunderstanding a situation about a piece of gull control work.

Performance on processing complete driver license renewals was at 98.6% for all authorities, with several individual authorities being 100%. This is again great work by the team. A handful of applications fell

outside of our 5-day time scale and one of these because it was referred to a sub-committee that refused the license.

The data on defective vehicles relates to situations where the vehicle is recorded as having been suspended either by the district garage on inspection or by an officer, usually following a reported accident taking the vehicle outside the acceptable standards. At the end of last year, we saw an increase in the number of defective vehicles reported under this indicator, driven mainly by higher numbers in one of the six fleets. We have a similar picture at the end of Q2 this year, with 37 vehicles having been suspended in the period but with 25 being in that same fleet area. Even with this number, only 2.37% of the fleet county-wide are recorded as potentially problematic. More details appear in the table in appendix B at the end of the report. We hope that we can work with the operators to reduce this figure, but members of the trade need to be aware that they must always keep their vehicles up to standard and that the regular tests are not to be used to assess what maintenance may be required.

Staff sickness has increased from 0.9 days per FTE to 1.79 days per FTE cumulative for the year. Current sickness levels are higher than the same period last year (1.55,) and the year before (0.94,) but lower than the figures for 2019/20 (2.91,) and 2018/19 (2.77) at the same point in the year. So, we continue to move toward pre-pandemic levels.

The rate of noise complaints against population is 0.91. This is slightly lower than the figure at Q2 last year (1.08,) but like the figures in the previous 2 years (0.94 and 0.85 respectively.) Members will be aware that this measure has been significantly higher at this point in previous years with 1.7 in 2018/19 and 2.1 in 2017/18. Hopefully, the current figure again is indicative of a return to normal levels.

The rate of hospitality businesses not upholding the 4 licensing objectives is 2.7%. This is significantly below the previous three years' figures at this point (6.7%, 4.3%, 4.9%,) and much closer to the 2.8% seen in 2018/19. We know that, on occasion, one or other district can hit above 8%, but figures so far this year look good and hopefully it will continue in a similar vein.

Income brought in during the first half of 2022/23 is £232,520, which is significantly up on last year at this point (£163, 583,) and the previous year (£131,901). Using the historic budget figure for 2016/17 (£3,017,000) to maintain the comparison with previous years, this comes out at 7.7%. Hopefully, this shows we are starting to see more normality returned in the areas that generate our income streams. We have not included additional income for work on issues like supporting Ukrainian

refugees as this is work done on behalf of the six partners and we try to use this measure to look at work we do for others.

Contact Points

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Background Papers

Appendix A: Activity Report (separate document), Appendix B below

Appendix B: Performance indicator table 2022/23

Indicator	Reporting period	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4/ Outrun
1. % of service requests where resolution is achieved to customers satisfaction	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	55.6	54.1		
2. % of service requests where resolution is achieved to business satisfaction	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	98.7	98.6		
3. % businesses broadly compliant at first assessment/ inspection	Annually	98.4	Bromsgrove 99.2% Malvern Hills 97.9% Redditch 97.0% Worcester City 98.9% Wychavon 97.6% Wyre Forest 98.4% Worcestershire 98.2%		
4. % of food businesses scoring 0,1 or 2 at 1 st April each year	Annually	1.6	Bromsgrove 0.8% Malvern Hills 2.1% Redditch 3.0% Worcester City 1.1% Wychavon 2.4% Wyre Forest 1.6% Worcestershire 1.8%		
5 % of drivers licence renewal applications issued within 5 working days of receipt of a	6-monthly	NA	98%	NA	

complete application					
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	37 = 2.37% of 1562 vehicles on the road county-wide BDC 3 MHDC 1 RBC 25 WC 2 WDC 1 WFDC 4	NA	
7 % of service requests where customer indicates they feel better equipped to deal with issues themselves in future	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	46.7	45.9		
8 Review of register of complaints/compliments	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	8/23	19/37		
9 Annual staff sickness absence at public sector average or better	Quarterly NB: figure is cumulative	0.90 days per FTE	1.79 date 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 2.2% Malvern Hills 1.3% Redditch 1.3% Worcester City 2.8% Wychavon 3.8% Wyre Forest 3.5% Worcestershire 2.7%	NA	

Agenda Item 7

12 Rate of noise complaint per 1000 head of population	6-monthly	NA	Bromsgrove 0.97 Malvern Hills 0.76 Redditch 0.91 Worcester City 1.14 Wychavon 0.69 Wyre Forest 1.04 Worcestershire 0.91	NA	
13 Total income expressed as a % of district base revenue budget (16/17)	6-monthly	NA	£232,520, which is 7.7% as a proportion of the 2016/17 revenue budget figure (£3,017,000)	NA	
14 Cost of regulatory services per head of population (Calculation will offset income against revenue budget)	Annually	NA	NA	NA	

Worcestershire
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Activity Report | 2022-23



Bromsgrove
District Council
www.bromsgrove.gov.uk



Malvern
Hills
District
Council
www.malvern hills.gov.uk



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Worcester
CITY COUNCIL



WYCHAVON
DISTRICT COUNCIL
good services, good value



Wyre Forest
District Council

Foreword

Welcome to the second activity report for 2022/3. It follows the format you will all now be familiar with and covers the period 1st April to 30th June 2022, but the graphs and tables allow comparison with the data in previous years.

Stray dog numbers continued to increase during the second quarter, up in the first quarter, by 24% on the same period last year and 21% on the one previous to that. Officers have struggled during the summer to find kennelling space for all of the dogs picked up and they thank those we work with for the flexibility they've shown in helping us to house our strays. Thankfully, 67% of them were reunited with their owners, but obviously that does mean that many have to be re-homed by the charities we work with.

Officers continued with the final year of the FSA's Food Recovery programme with a significant number of interventions, above the same period last year and much higher than the previously year when visit programmes were suspended by the Agency. Food complaints continued to fall this quarter compared to the same quarter last year and appear to reaching levels last seen at the beginning of 2020/21. We hope this is leading us towards pre-pandemic levels which will very much show a return to normality. Activity on Health and Safety at Work follows a similar pattern to previous years but at a slightly elevated level. More worryingly in this area is the number of fatalities that the service currently has on its books.

Information requests were up and requests for planning support appeared to be ceasing their downward trajectory. These two figures are often linked as many information requests link into the planning process, so this may suggest a planning upturn in the coming weeks although anecdotally officers also report numbers of FOI requests coming in.

Licensing complaints dipped slightly below the trend line during quarter 2 but applications remained slightly up, reflecting the continued work of hospitality trades to restore their fortunes post-pandemic.

Pollution and nuisance complaints continued the upward trend we saw starting during Q4 at the end of last financial year. Whilst we did not quite hit the heights of overall numbers seen in previous years, with a high starting point due to the early upturn, the summer was incredibly busy for staff dealing with nuisance matters. We always see an upturn into the warmer months, but this year has felt very pressured.

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.



Simon Wilkes
Head of Regulatory Services

Quarter One

The Community Environmental Health Team were kept incredibly busy throughout quarter one across the whole range of environmental health work.

Tragically we received a report in respect of a fatality at a white-collar boxing event which we are investigating in close collaboration with the Coroner's Office. Additional ongoing health and safety investigations include an accident involving a vehicle hitting an employee on private land in Kinver, whereby we had to detain the vehicle for examination, and a prosecution file has been submitted to Legal Services in respect of a serious forklift truck incident at a major retailer.

Your Officers resolved a significant private water supply issue in Timberhonger, providing support to the UK Security Health Authority in providing notices to residents on elevated Arsenic levels. Officers worked hard with landlord to resolve the issue, getting the water tested and implementing a regime for regular testing.

The Team attended, and in some cases chaired, Safety Advisory Groups throughout the period to ensure public safety including those convened for the Commonwealth Games Queens Baton Relay throughout the County.

In nuisance work, WRS worked with a car wash in Pershore in meeting its undertaking in respect of works to resolve a noise problem. We were also able to provide expertise in advising a local business in preventing light nuisance to residents where a film company was using their premises to film at night. We continued to receive a significant number of complaints concerning pubs having live music events in their gardens, often where they were fundamentally unsuitable for such events due to the proximity of neighbouring residential premises. We adopted a proactive intelligence-led approach to monitoring various large-scale events planned through the summer and served abatement notices in respect of noise from fans in Evesham, a cockerel crowing at a café in Bromsgrove, noise from barking at kennels and odour nuisance in Ombersley linked with a Planning enforcement notice. Another cockerel case made the national press, appearing in "The Sun", where we had been able to intervene and resolve the case.

A landowner in Worcester was served with a notice in respect of controlling rats and a Simple Caution was issued in respect of a long-running nuisance case involving barking dogs in Worcester. We also dealt with disturbance from a warehouse rave, carried out a BS4142 noise assessment on an industrial company in Evesham and investigated smoke nuisance from a business directed to burn tomato plants by The Animal and Plant Health Authority in Throckmorton.

A sad case involved the case of a deceased gentleman who had been resting with a Worcestershire Funeral Director for several months. We were contacted as conditions were getting very difficult for the staff and, for the dignity of the deceased, a funeral was needed. The situation was that money could not be released from the Estate and the daughter was abroad and unable to act. Your Officer intervened under the Public Health (Control of Diseases) Act 1984, and we were able to make the appropriate arrangements.

In food safety work, we were able to deliver 729 Inspections of which 185 were "first time" as we continued to focus on the Food Standards Agency Post Pandemic Recovery Programme which commenced in August 2021 and runs to March 2023.

Quarter Two

Private Water Supplies and Drainage

Our private water supplies specialist, who holds Drinking Water Inspectorate accreditation for water sampling, is currently undertaking sampling for a neighbouring local authority as part of our income generation work. Your Officers have been liaising with Seven Trent Water regarding several problems with odour from sewage pumping stations, including some which are yet to be adopted as part of major new housing developments. We are also in the process of obtaining a warrant to access premises in Redditch where it is suspected that sewage is leaking from their system into a neighbouring basement, where the occupier has refused us access.

Infection Control

The team continue to liaise with Public Health to ensure preparedness for any Covid-19 seasonal surge which may increase demand on the service to deal with outbreaks and potentially public health funerals.

Nuisance

The team is currently dealing with appeal against a noise abatement notice served on premises in Wyre Forest relating to noise from dogs barking at a kennels. The hearing, in the Magistrates Court, will be heard in December. We are also working with licensing colleagues to investigate whether there is breach of a Noise Abatement Notice served for excessive barking from kennels located in Wychavon, which resulted in a residents meeting being arranged to explore the issues involved.

Notice under the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act has been served on premises at Rose Hill, Worcester, in relation to a rat infestation. Should action not be taken by the owner to put things right, then remedial works can be carried out by the service in default.

Several complaints have been received concerning smoke/odour from newly installed log burners at domestic premises around the county. It is believed that these may be driven by the rise in fuel costs, and the situation is being monitored to establish if this is going to become an increasing problem.

Food Safety

184 new food registrations were received between July and September and the sector remains very volatile, with 390 premises having closed over the same period. Your officers made a total of 535 food safety interventions during the period and two Appeals were received challenging the Food Hygiene Rating Score (FHRS) awarded, one of which was upheld by your Food Lead. In income generation work, 21 Food Export Certificates were issued and 9 FHRS re-rating requests were received.

Two Hygiene Emergency Prohibition Orders were served during the quarter and ratified by magistrates, one on a food producer in Bromsgrove for production in an unsuitable and hidden food room and one on a business in Malvern for generally dirty conditions and another hidden food preparation room. Prosecution files are in preparation for these cases. Two other enforcement files for serious non-compliances are being prepared, relating to businesses in Malvern Hills and Redditch districts.

Quarter Two (Continued)

Your officers are spending considerable time in supporting businesses with allergen compliance, particularly in respect of cross contamination risks in kitchens, which continues to present challenges to many food businesses across the county and falls to Environmental Health to deal as a food safety matter. There is also joint activity with Trading Standards on wider aspects of allergen controls.

The ongoing financial crisis is impacting on businesses and where they receive a poor FHRs score, there are signs of an increase in requests for re-rating visits. If a food premises gets a FHRs Level 0 (the lowest) they are automatically removed from platforms such as “Just Eat”.

Businesses scoring Level 0 to Level 2 continue to attract press interest as they are published on the national website. Reports of officer visits are also releasable under the Brand Standard and do not require a Freedom of Information request. These two factors are assisting us in ensuring that improvements are made as poor ratings affect trade. The Food Lead can refuse to re-rate premises with serious contraventions for up to three months during which time they must demonstrate that they are able to comply over a reasonable period. For other businesses the average revisit is made within two weeks.

WRS continues to play an active role in national activities related to food safety. Your Food Lead is now Chair of the Primary Authority Expert Panel for the Hospitality sector which is supported by BEIS. The Food Standards Agency is also beginning to reach out to local authorities about a review of The Food Law Code of Practice into how interventions are done, but it is unlikely there will be major changes to the current ways of working until 2024. WRS continues to blaze the trail in respect of the use of intelligence to drive its intervention programmes.

Health and Safety

The team is being kept very busy with some complex and challenging health and safety accident investigations, some of which have involved fatalities and close liaison with West Mercia Police. More details of these can be shared once they have progressed through the legal process.

WRS officers have also been instrumental in the process of ensuring that the professional Worcester Warriors Premiership rugby team could fulfil their home fixtures by working with the safety officer at the club to maintain the General Safety Certificate for Sixways as the club unfortunately passed into Administration. This Safety at Sports Grounds work is carried out on a contract basis by WRS on behalf of Worcestershire County Council who have the legal responsibility for issuing safety certificates. Our ongoing work secures events being held safely at Sixways Stadium.

It is worth noting that all the work described in this section is carried out by a single multi-disciplinary Community Environmental Health team, with professional officers supported by their line managers balancing all of these competing demands across an extensive and challenging range of subject areas.

Quarter One

The first quarter of every year always sees a steady increase in applications and this quarter has been no different with an increase in TENs applications leading the way as usual this time of year closely followed by taxi licensing.

The team are out doing more visits than ever before in all areas of licensing and this has illustrated where more resource have been allocated and more so in certain areas rather than others. These compliance visits will continue throughout the remainder of the year. Caravan licensing inspections have reached the second phase of the project with the majority of less contentious sites across Wychavon and Worcester City now being visited. There have been scheduled Taxi checks undertaken across the County and some in partnership with the County Council and officers are still finding problems with vehicles. The team will be looking to do more communication activities with the trade on the back of this. Animal licensing inspections have also peaked with officers now looking at the interim inspections that are required to be undertaken within the duration of a licence.

Within Taxi Licensing the Taxi Standards work has continued and the team are working with various suppliers to agree a provider for the 'Competency Certificate' whereby new drivers will undertake a suite of training as required under the new guidance.

Licensing officers have also commenced their annual training sessions for Members across all districts with more training to be provided later in the once the Taxi Standards have been implemented.

Quarter Two

The increase in summer events have seen the licensing team dealing with an increase in TENs applications and therefore we have increased capacity in the team to deal with these and cover the teams annual leave over the summer. You will see all other applications have started to slowly dip as they have done so in previous years around this time and this usually starts to increase again around the end of Quarter 3.

The Licensing team successfully implemented the Taxi Standards across all six districts with all new drivers from the 1st September 2022 now undertaking the new competency certificate delivered by Worcestershire County Council. There were mop up sessions held for applicants that were already in the system and had not completed the various elements required by each district prior to this date.

Quarter Two (Continued)

Phase 3 of the Caravan project commenced and these are the more problematic sites where officers have not had a lot of historic contact with the site owners so they will be visited by officers to ensure compliance. The project has flagged some very well run sites across the two districts but also some very contentious ones where planning colleagues have required involvement. The long term aim is to have all officers trained in doing inspections so any issues can be dealt with quickly and efficiently.

Animal Licensing inspections continue with an increase in unregulated activity and complaints taking up more officer time. With the regulations now being in implementation since 2018 there is a lot of work being undertaken by managers across the Country in liaison with external stakeholders to re-look at the legislation, guidance and the wider ramifications of its introductions with a view to making changes. With this in mind the focus of the team has now been on how officers can streamline the process. There continues to be intelligence led project work on Illegal dog breeding and work with the intelligence team has continued to develop this since the spike during covid. The team also had their first appeal lodged at the First-Tier Tribunal against a refusal of an Animal Activity Licence.

Quarter 2 saw an increase in the number of sub committees being held with officers preparing reports and information with a very unusual high number of 11 sub committees in Worcester City alone just for this quarter. There have been a number of complex and contentious premises reviews in the north and officers have been preparing reports and information for committee members to consider.

Quarter One

Information Management

Quarter one is particularly busy for our Information Management and Database Administration team with the preparation and submission of most of the service's government returns. Much of the day to day activity has been focused on increasing security and resilience of our systems. This has included include regular updates and patches to our main back office system, facilitating the recall of all laptops and mobiles for security updates, and promotion of cyber security awareness for all staff. In addition the team continues to help to support the income generation target of the service by delivering paid for services to Bromsgrove and Redditch Council's Planning Department, Worcestershire County Council Trading Standards and Tewkesbury Borough Council's Environmental Health & Licensing teams.

COVID Advisors

With no COVID restrictions in place the work of supporting the public and businesses with COVID recovery was continued through the first quarter of this year. This supporting Environmental Health colleagues providing advice and guidance to businesses through low level food hygiene inspections where compliance had been adversely impacted by the pandemic and to residents affected by nuisance where businesses had sought to change their operating methods to comply with restrictions or adapt to public demands post COVID. On the 20th April COVID advisors assisted with the Vaccine pop up clinic in Worcester where there was an uptake of 90 vaccinations, and also at further clinics in Worcester on the 7th May with an uptake of 71 Vaccinations and 28th May with an uptake of 12 vaccinations.

With COVID funding due to come to an end, a process of diversification was undertaken to enable the team to utilise their skills in engagement and contribute towards the service's income generation targets by providing meaningful assistance to our Partner authorities with the Homes for Ukraine scheme. Advisors, have been carrying out safeguarding checks for the guests arriving from Ukraine for Bromsgrove and Redditch during this period.

Enforcement Team

During quarter one of this year, we have been utilising former contact tracing staff with enforcement skills and knowledge to complement our existing service provision and enable us to widen it by assisting Bromsgrove, Malvern Hills, Redditch, and Wychavon Planning Enforcement teams. For Bromsgrove and Redditch, we have been delivering the vast majority of the service delivery deploying a range of investigative and enforcement tools to assist with COVID-backlogs and skills, knowledge and experience shortages. The work is exceptionally varied, ranging from unauthorised changes of use to breaches of permitted development rights and for Redditch and Bromsgrove areas will continue for the rest of the year.

Quarter Two

Information Management and Database Administration

In addition to our normal workload, we worked with Wyre Forest IT to plan and then re-equip our office in keeping with our agile working approach. Most desks now have a simplified and more efficient docking system for laptops, which just requires single cable to connect. This move to mainly using laptops will reduce the duplication of devices and licences we use to reduce costs. We have continued to support the WRS budget with providing support services to Bromsgrove and Redditch Development Control, Worcestershire Trading Standards and Tewkesbury Borough Council's Environmental Health and Licensing teams.

The WRS website is continually developed to support our self-service options and has included accessibility checks. During this last quarter we have been running our annual website review, where our webpage content is reviewed and updated where necessary. This is a key component of our ability to enable self-service and provide appropriate advice and resources with the aim of reducing customer demand on our phone line and email traffic. As you would expect, over the quarter we have taken part in various activities designed to increase the security and resilience of the computer system we use and activity reduce our vulnerability to cyber attacks. These activities include regular updates and patches to our main back office system, record retention and deletion, and cyber security awareness for all staff.

Former COVID Advisors

From the 6th July the remainder of the COVID Advisors joined in the efforts to help assist with the Homes for Ukraine Scheme and support our Partner Authority colleagues. Three part time Advisors assisted with Safeguarding and welfare checks for the scheme in Redditch and Bromsgrove areas and two full time Advisors assisted with property checks for the scheme in Wychavon and Malvern Hills areas. With currently 75 hosts in Bromsgrove, 46 in Redditch, 180 in Wychavon and 140 in Malvern (and with more being added each week) our District colleagues have been under pressure and on a cost recovery basis we have been supporting the work to ensure the impact on wider service delivery has been minimised. The team have enjoyed being able to support the scheme but there have been some complex and challenging cases, which is understandable given the on going situation in Ukraine and the uncertainties for both hosts and visitors.

Dog Warden Service

During the last quarter, the dog warden service has sadly seen more strays being picked up in poor condition and needing more veterinary care. It is likely the cost of living crisis is already having an impact on the ability of the wider public to care for their dogs, as evidenced in the dogs we are seizing. We have picked up numerous welfare dogs, some with broken legs, open wounds, sores, sarcoptic mange, infected ears and eyes and an awful lot with matted fur. It is assumed that the increased cost of veterinary and grooming care with reductions in disposable income means dog owners are struggling financially and can no longer afford to get them the care needed. Wider impacts of the cost of living crisis may also be being seen with an increase in requests for assistance in rehoming/handing over dogs that are no longer wanted due to domestic violence, hardship and owners needing to rehome their dogs in emergency situations where they are having to seek refuge and cannot take their pets with them.

Air Quality

August saw the launch of Defra's air quality grant round for 2022-23. This year finance was distributed in two lots allowing WRS to bid for lot 2 to support our work on air quality for the first time in several years. This is because funding has been previously prioritised to mandated air quality management zones such as Birmingham, Coventry and Manchester. WRS have bid for £276,000 to support its programme of enhanced air quality monitoring. The data harvested will enable the partners to fulfil elements of its commitments in terms of the air quality action planning, enhance its current knowledge around the impact of particulates and provide the building blocks for the development of a network of units that will provide a public information/notification service for poor air quality episodes that are in real time and not dependant on national forecasting or retrospective reporting.

Notwithstanding the above the monitoring will be focused on specific locations for the purpose of enabling behaviour changes to be made. This will provide greater opportunities for the public and businesses to engage with air quality management and focus the attention of all organisations concerned on those areas where additional participation is required to resolve air quality issues.

Officers completed the application at the end of September. The award to successful applicants is expected in April 2023.

September also saw officers commence the process of reviewing the Air Quality Action Plan(2013). An officer group consisting of County Highways, Sustainability and WRS air quality management staff has been assembled to deliver this work. It is anticipated that the development of the new plan will take 12 months to complete and will be framed in accordance with DEFRA's current requirements under the Environment Act 2021.

Contaminated Land

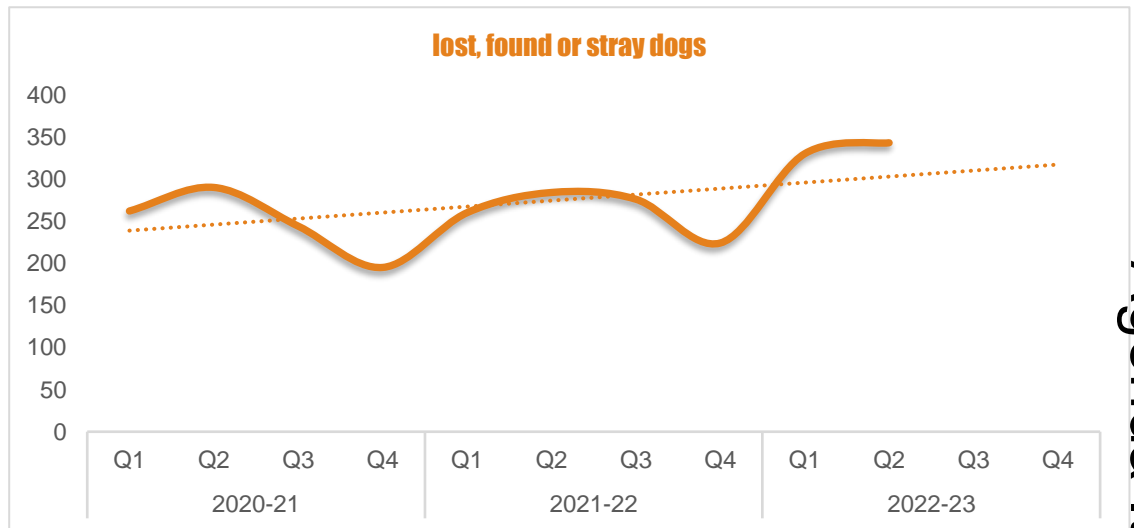
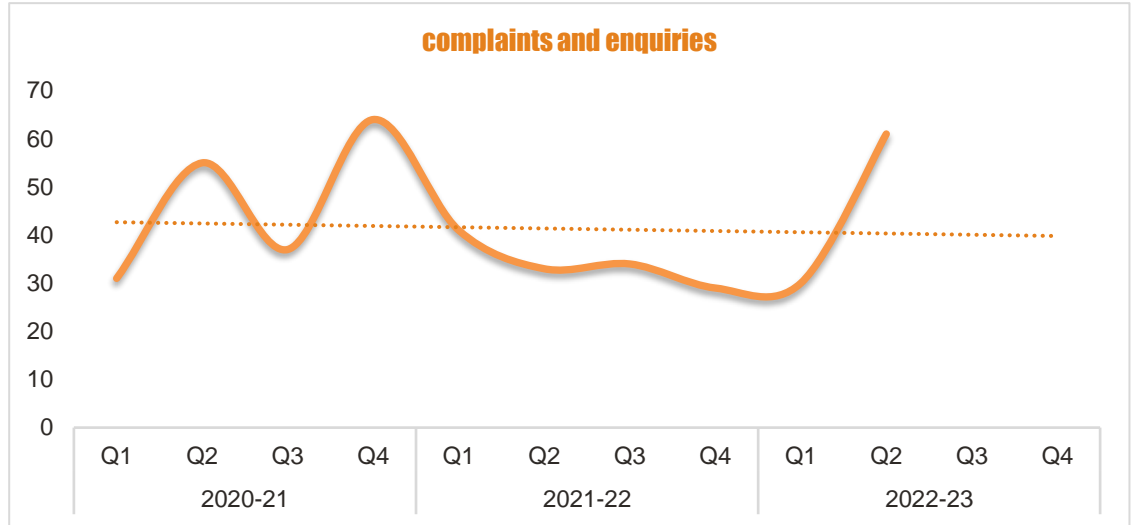
The Environment Agency concluded their investigations on the old fire station/county buildings at Winsor Street, Bromsgrove due to concerns raised by WRS regarding offsite PFAS & PFOA contamination found in a major water aquifer used for drinking water. The Environment Agency have decided that they will not be taking any further action on the site.

Dog Control

The chart (top right) shows the number of complaints and enquiries recorded by WRS over a three year period relating to dog control. Types of cases recorded under this category include fouling and persistent straying, dangerous dogs and welfare. The chart (bottom right) shows the number of dogs recorded by WRS as lost, found or seen straying.

The number of stray or lost dogs recorded by WRS during the year to date is an increase of 24% compared to 2021-22, but an increase of 21% compared to 2020-21. Approximately 70% of cases related to 'contained' stray dogs; which means that a dog was found and held by, for example, a member of the public. Overall, 67% of contained strays were reunited with their owners, however, figures vary significantly between local authorities.

In general terms, WRS receives a relatively low number of dog control complaints. Based on the 45 complaints recorded, 25 have related to fouling and persistent straying, 12 have related to dangerous dogs, and have related to welfare concerns.



Environmental Permitting

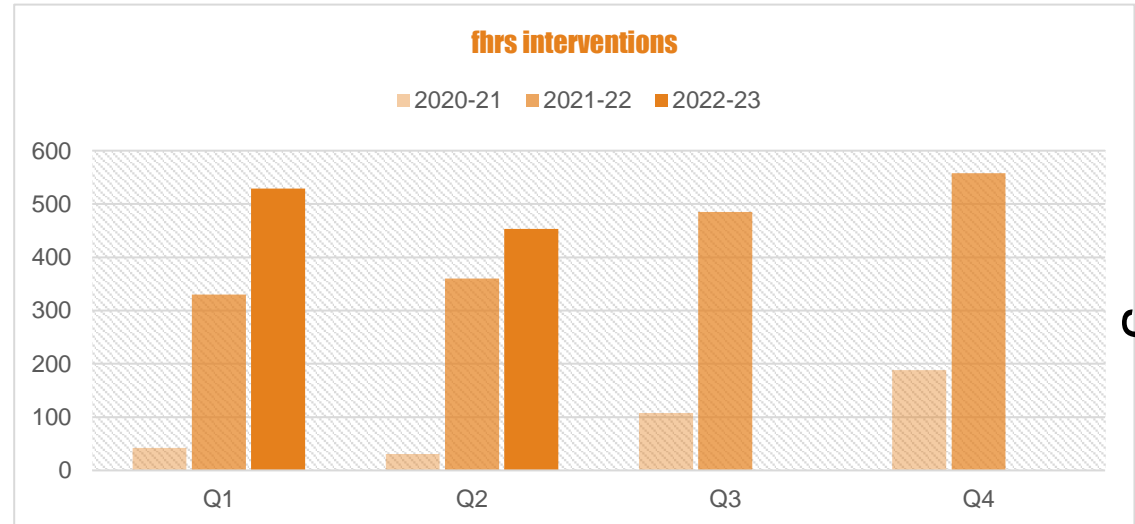
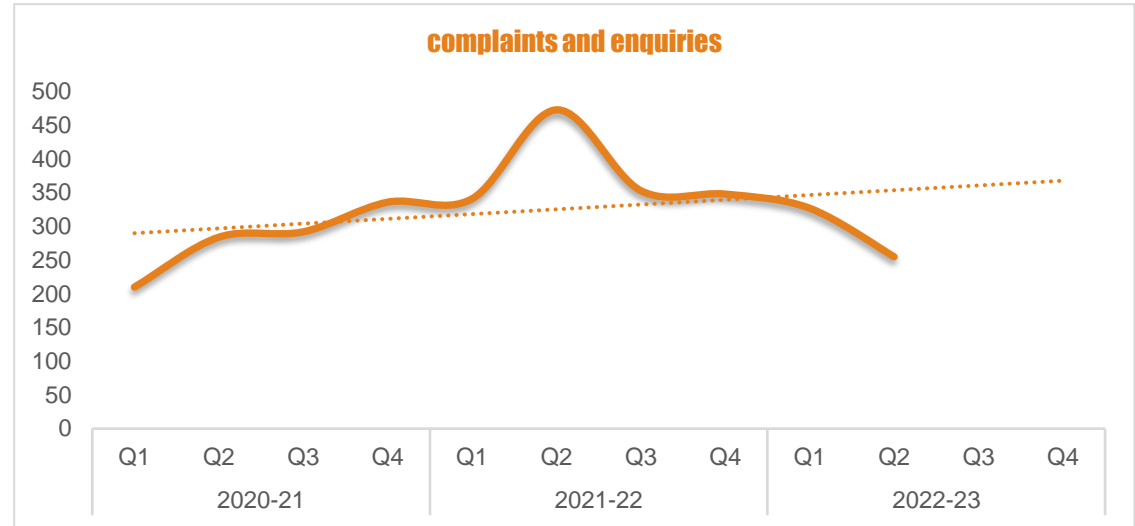
DEFRA presented its new system of delivering Environmental Permitting regulation post Brexit called UK-BAT. The Environment Agency are busy setting up the UK regulatory mechanism that will oversee the development of new emissions standards for England and the devolved administrations (excluding Scotland) and it is likely that Local authority officers will have input into the development of the regime. It is anticipated that WRS will be requested to sit on the technical working groups due to its expertise in regulating ceramic, solvent and non-ferrous metal activities. DEFRA estimate this to be a rolling programme of work and it will take between 10-15 years to complete a full review of all the industry sector's regulation.

Food Safety

The chart (top right) shows the number of complaints and enquiries recorded by WRS over a three year period relating to food safety. Types of cases recorded under this category include complaints about food products, hygiene of premises complaints and requests for business advice. The chart (bottom right) shows the number of interventions conducted by WRS at premises included in the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme, commonly known as FHRS.

The number of food safety cases recorded by WRS during the year to date is a reduction of 28% compared to 2021-22, but an increase of 18% compared to 2020-21. In general terms, a higher proportion of food safety cases are enquiries such as requests for business advice or export health certificates. Based on the 278 complaints recorded, 75% have related to issues with products purchased from food businesses, whilst 25% have related to poor hygiene standards and practices.

Of the interventions conducted at businesses included in the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS), 39 were rated as non-compliant (0, 1 or 2) with most of these ratings issued to takeaways, restaurants, and small retailers.

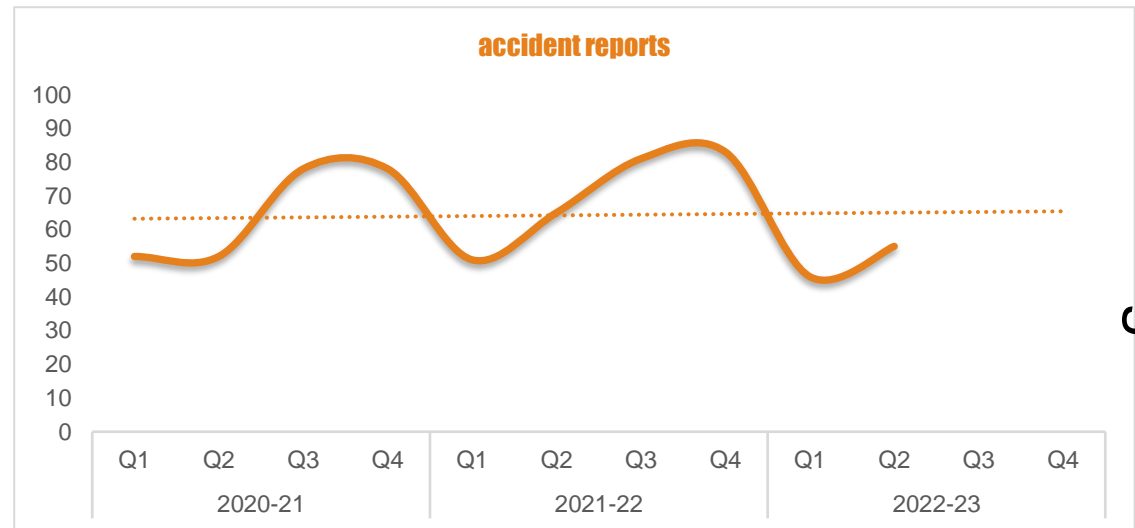
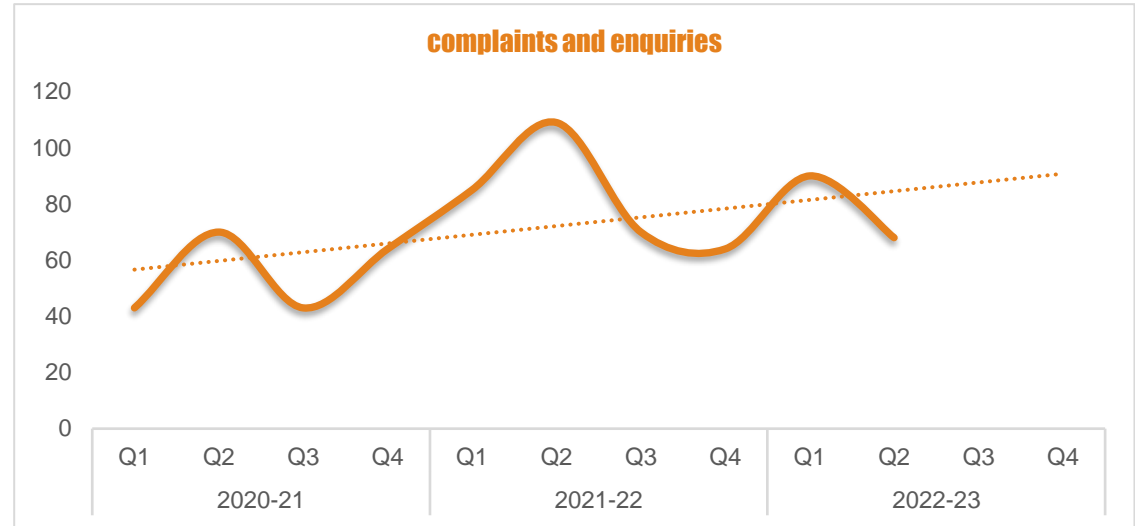


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Health and Safety

The chart (top right) shows the number of complaints and enquiries recorded by WRS over a three year period relating to health and safety at work. This includes requests for business advice. The chart (bottom right) shows the number of notifications received by WRS relating to accidents.

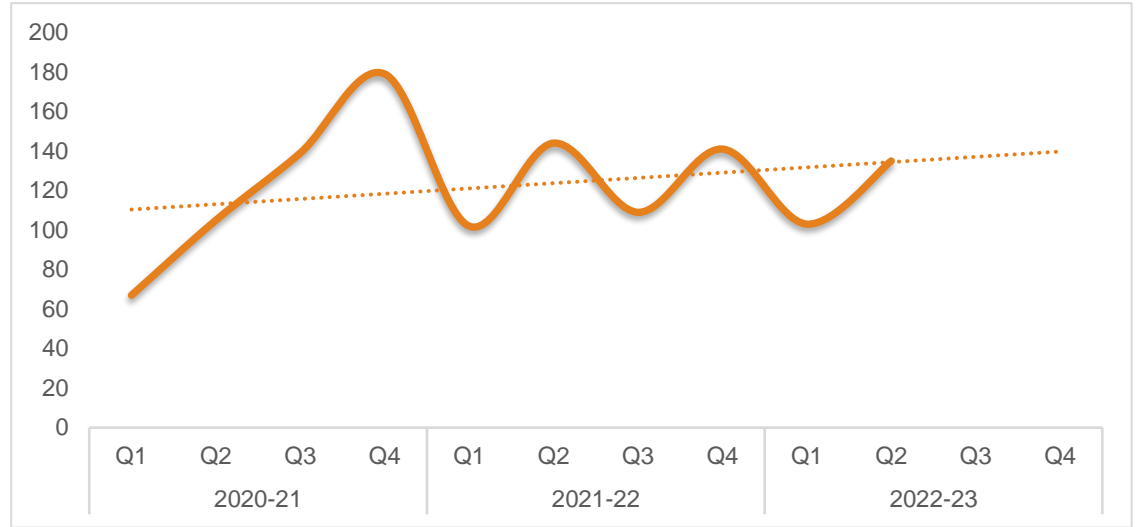
The number of health and safety cases recorded by WRS during the year to date is a reduction of 16% compared to 2021-22, but an increase of 19% compared to 2020-21. Approximately 39% of cases were reports of accidents, with 45% relating to injuries where a worker was incapacitated for more than seven days and 32% relating to injuries to members of the public. The remaining cases were either accidents where major injuries were sustained, dangerous occurrences, and two fatalities. Slips, trips, and falls continues to be the prominent cause of accidents.



Information Requests

The chart (right) shows the number of information requests recorded by WRS over a three year period. Information requests can relate to either the following;

- Environmental Information Requests
- Freedom of Information Requests
- Requests for information under the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)



Licensing

The chart (top right) shows the number complaints and enquiries recorded by WRS over a three year period relating to licensing. The chart (bottom right) shows the number of licensing applications.

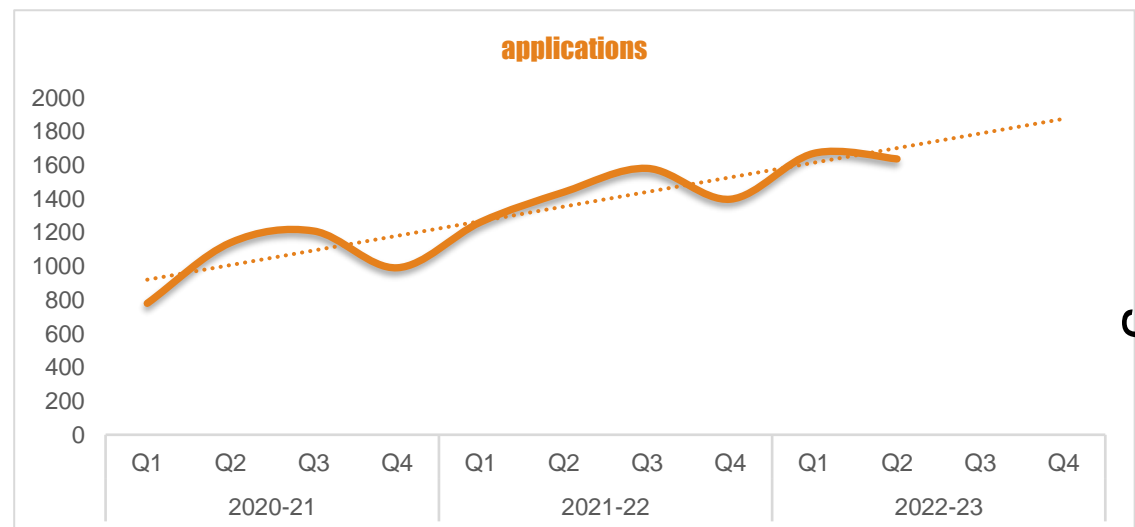
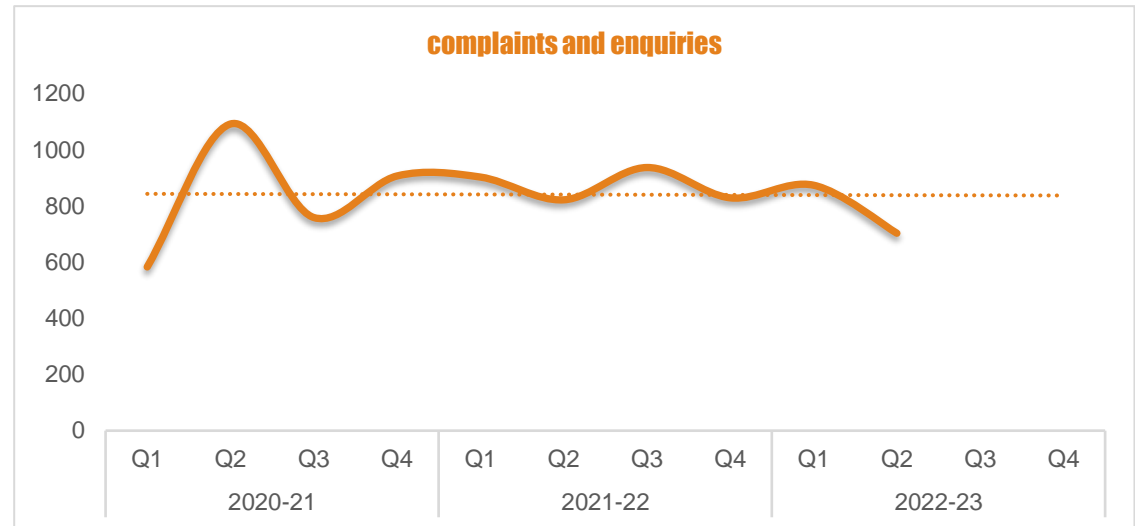
Licensing complaints, enquiries and applications relate to the following;

- Alcohol and entertainment (including gambling)
- Animals
- Caravans
- Scrap metal
- Sex establishments
- Skin piercing
- Street trading
- Taxis

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The number of licensing cases recorded by WRS during the year to date is an increase of 10% compared to 2021-22, but an increase of 36% compared to 2020-21. It should be noted, however, that there were significantly fewer licensing applications recorded two years ago due to COVID restrictions and the closure of many hospitality premises. Approximately 68% of cases have been applications and registrations; with 30% relating to temporary events, 27% relating to private hire or hackney carriage vehicle licences, and 14% relating to driver licences.

In general terms, WRS receives a higher number of enquiries about licensing matters than complaints about licensed or unlicensed activity. Based on the 292 complaints recorded, 33% have related to taxi licensing, 29% to alcohol licensing, and 20% to animal licensing.

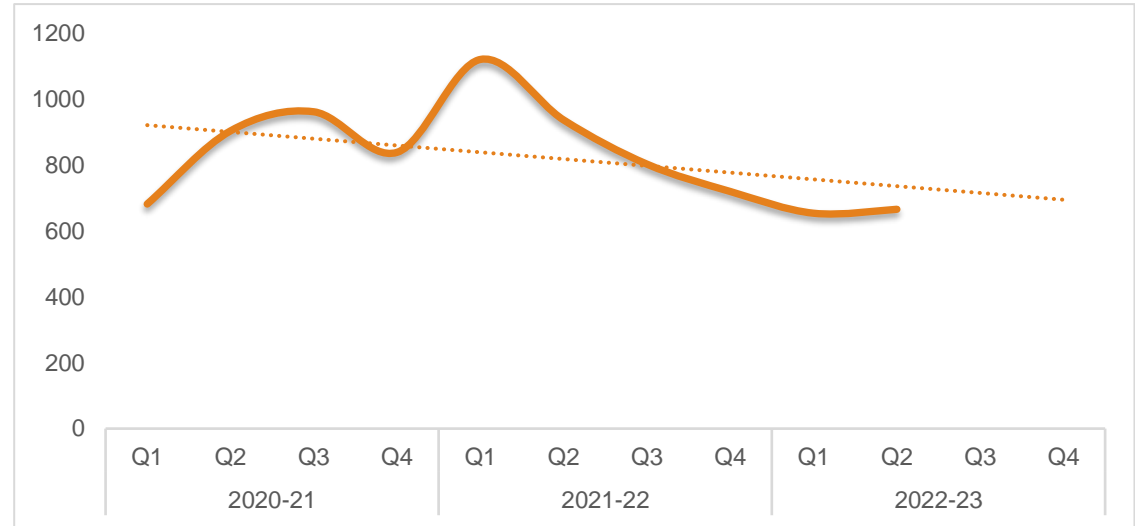


Planning

The chart (right) shows the number of planning enquiries completed by WRS over a three year period. The majority of these requests are consultations but can also include requests to discharge conditions.

Planning requests relate to the following;

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



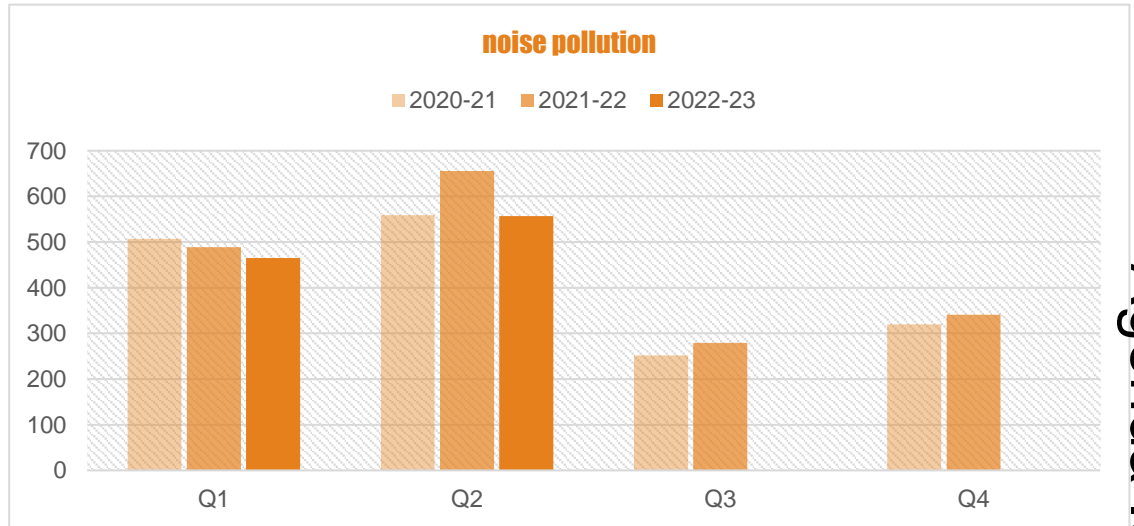
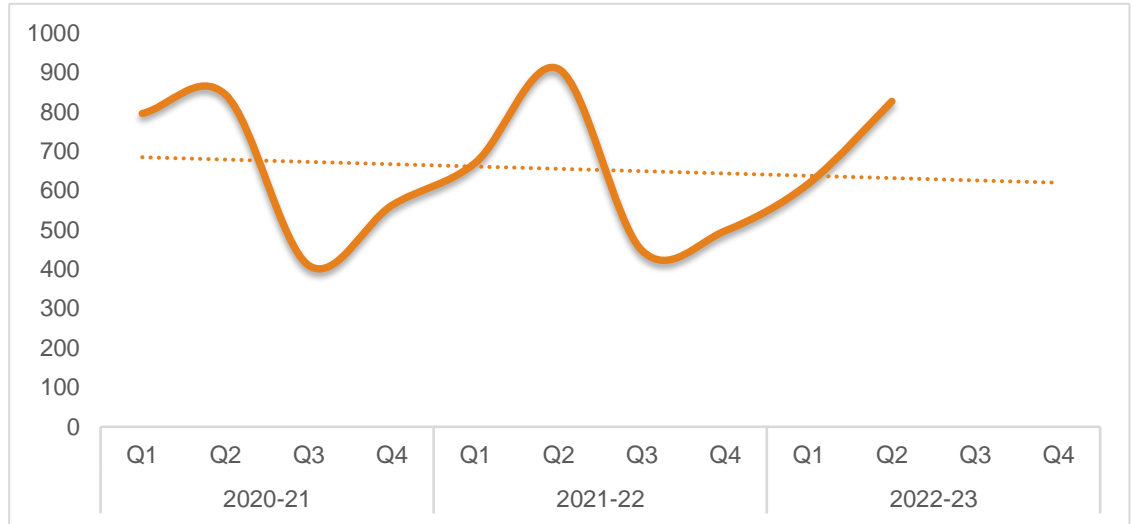
The number of planning enquiries completed by WRS during the year to date is a reduction of 36% compared to 2021-22, but a reduction of 17% compared to 2020-21. Approximately 89% of enquiries have been consultations, whilst 53% have related to contaminated land. Around 17% of enquiries have been completed, on a contractual basis, on behalf of other local authorities.

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Pollution

The chart (right) shows the number of complaints and enquiries recorded by WRS over a three year period relating to pollution. Types of cases recorded under this category include contamination incidents, air pollution (smoke, fumes and gases), light pollution and noise pollution. The chart (bottom right) shows the number of complaints and enquiries relating to noise pollution.

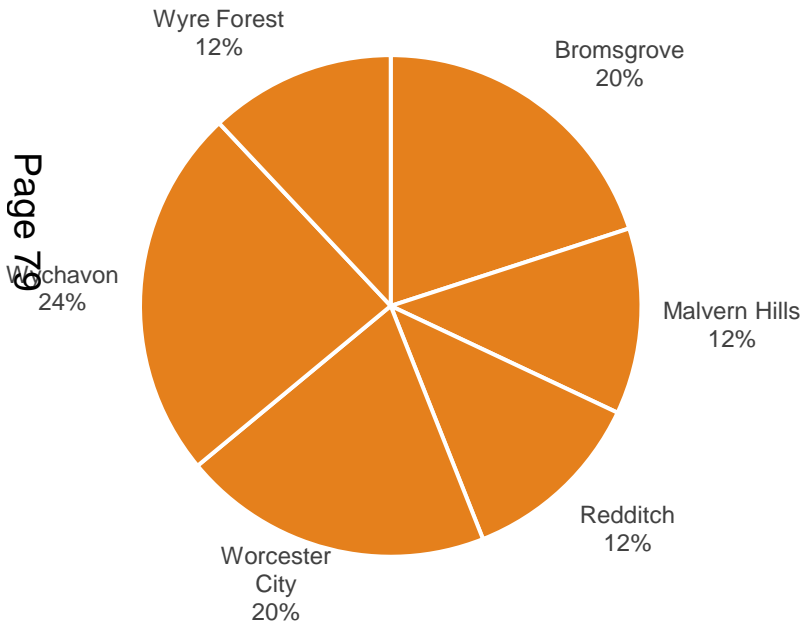
The number of pollution cases recorded by WRS during the year to date is a reduction of 8% compared to 2021-22, but a reduction of 12% compared to 2020-21. It should be noted, however, that the increased number of cases two years ago coincides with COVID-19 restrictions and a greater number of residents being at home. It also should be noted that totals are in line with seasonal variations. Approximately 71% of cases related to noise nuisances, with noise from domestic properties (such as from dog barking or noise from radio-visual equipment) the most prominent sources. A further 11% of cases related to smoke nuisances and issues such as the burning of domestic or commercial waste.



Noise

The table (right) shows the top 25 wards in Worcestershire with the highest case rate for noise pollution cases. It also shows the relative population and the number of cases recorded. The chart (below) shows the top 25 wards by district.

Note: Data shown on this page represents the 'year to date' and will continue to increase each quarter until the end of year report is published.

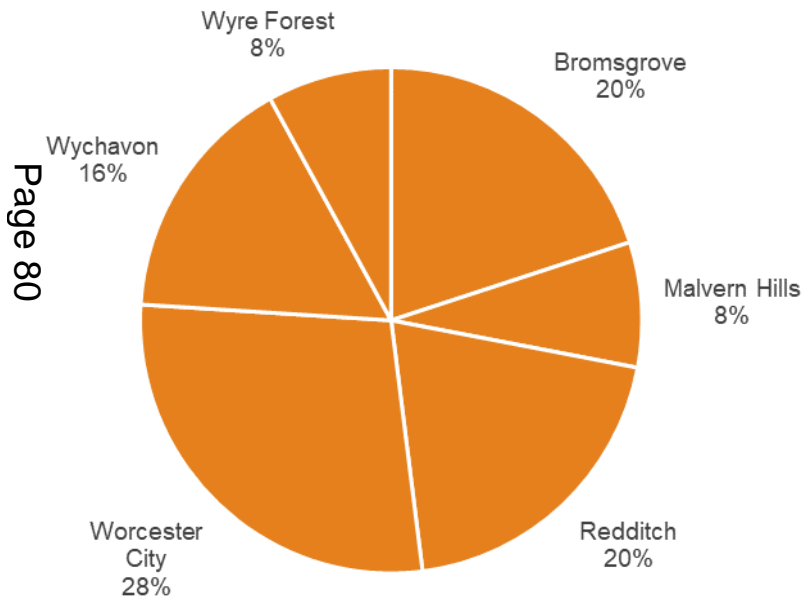


Ward	Total	Population	Rate
Marlbrook	13	2,890	4.50
Perryfields	5	1,501	3.33
Omersley	7	2,420	2.89
Lickhill	7	2,438	2.87
Teme Valley	5	1,964	2.55
Headless Cross And Oakenshaw	21	8,295	2.53
Warndon	14	5,669	2.47
Catshill North	7	2,846	2.46
Lowes Hill	7	2,903	2.41
Church Hill	19	8,062	2.36
Droitwich Central	6	2,621	2.29
Foley Park And Hoobrook	24	10,670	2.25
Arboretum	14	6,233	2.25
Hartlebury	7	3,140	2.23
Rainbow Hill	12	5,511	2.18
Bedwardine	17	8,167	2.08
Morton	5	2,447	2.04
Greenlands	19	9,329	2.04
Offmore And Comberton	19	9,664	1.97
Drakes Broughton	5	2,577	1.94
Alvechurch South	6	3,131	1.92
Cathedral	22	11,763	1.87
Droitwich South West	9	4,969	1.81
Honeybourne And Pebworth	5	2,831	1.77
Link	11	6,438	1.71

Noise (2021-22)

The table (right) shows the top 25 wards in Worcestershire with the highest case rate for noise pollution cases. It also shows the relative population and the number of cases recorded. The chart (below) shows the top 25 wards by district.

Note: Data shown on this page represents the 'year to date' and will continue to increase each quarter until the end of year report is published.



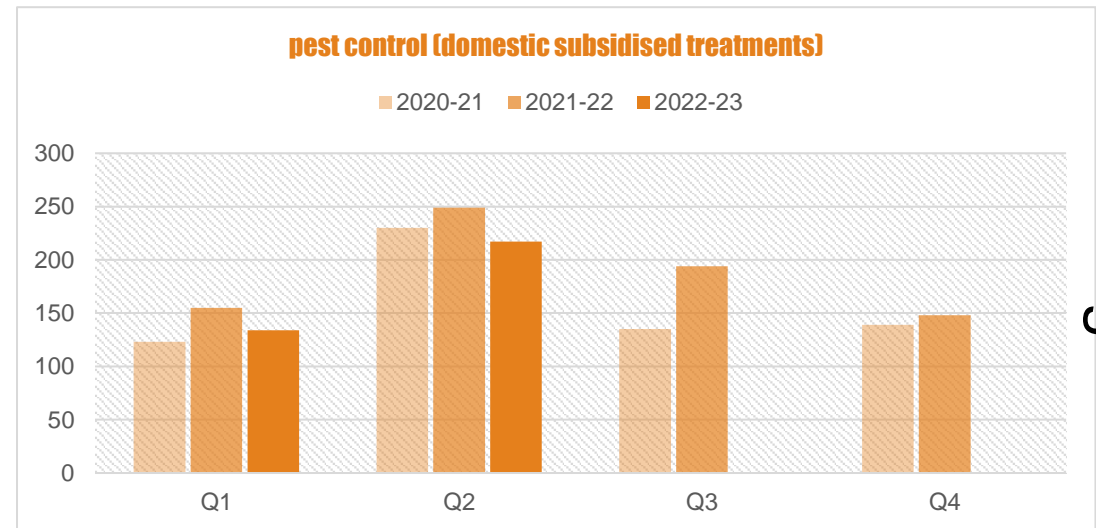
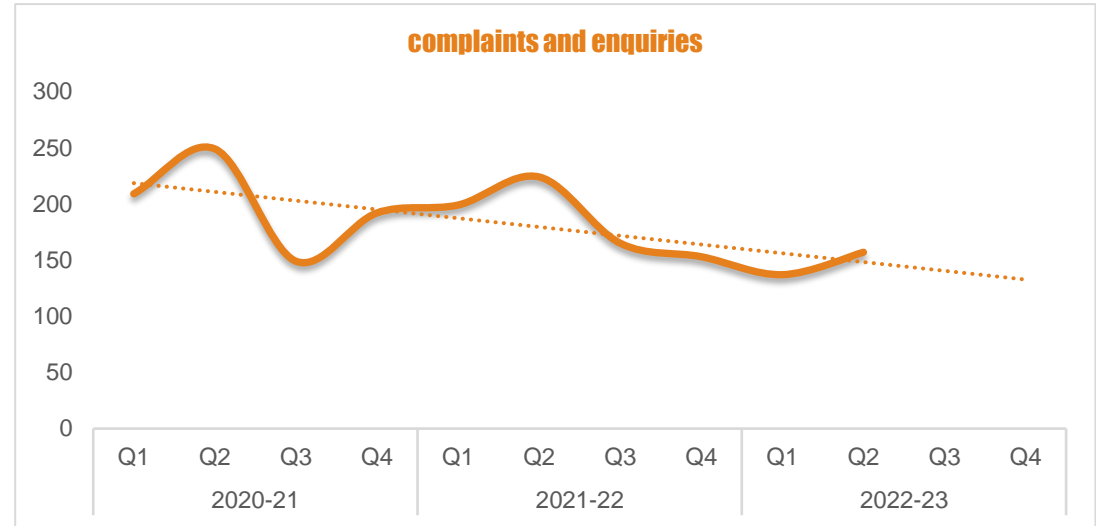
Ward	Total	Population	Rate
Eckington	22	2,669	8.24
Sanders Park	22	3,651	6.03
Norton	20	3,707	5.40
Marlbrook	14	2,890	4.84
Bedwardine	36	8,167	4.41
Harvington And Norton	12	2,756	4.35
Pinvin	13	3,105	4.19
Arboretum	25	6,233	4.01
Batchley And Brockhill	34	8,783	3.87
Rainbow Hill	21	5,511	3.81
Cathedral	43	11,763	3.66
Greenlands	33	9,329	3.54
Headless Cross And Oakenshaw	28	8,295	3.38
Perryfields	5	1,501	3.33
Winyates	27	8,184	3.30
Claines	26	8,076	3.22
Warndon	18	5,669	3.18
Link	20	6,438	3.11
Drakes Broughton	8	2,577	3.10
Church Hill	25	8,062	3.10
Avoncroft	10	3,300	3.03
Mitton	30	10,047	2.99
Gorse Hill	17	5,839	2.91
Wyre Forest Rural	26	9,106	2.86
Priory	13	4,636	2.80

Public Health

The chart (top right) shows the number of complaints and enquiries recorded by WRS over a three year period relating to public health. Types of cases recorded under this category include accumulations, public burials and pest control. The chart (bottom right) shows the number of subsidised pest control treatments have been carried out by contractors at domestic properties in four Worcestershire Districts (Bromsgrove, Malvern Hills, Redditch and Wychavon). Worcester City and Wyre Forest do not offer a subsidised pest control service.

The number of public health cases recorded by WRS during the year to date is a reduction of 30% compared to 2021-22, but a reduction of 35% compared to 2020-21. Approximately 66% of cases have related to pest control; whether enquiries about domestic treatments and sewer baiting, or complaints about pest control issues caused by the activity of neighbouring residents or businesses. A further 27% of cases have been complaints relating to accumulations at domestic properties which can also include pest control issues.

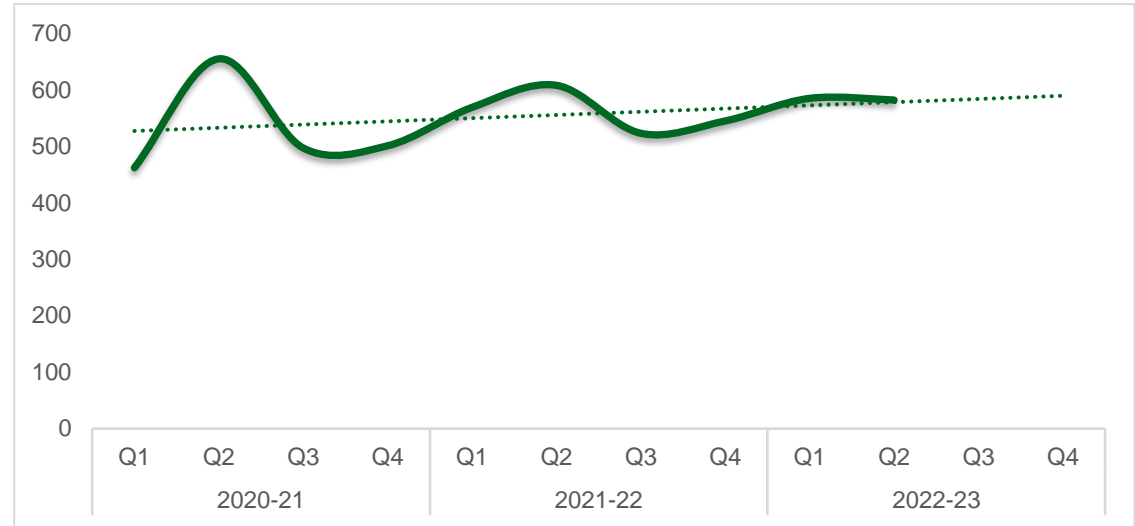
Of the 351 domestic treatments undertaken, approximately 53% have been due to issues with rats, 22% have been due to issues with wasps, and 35% have been due to pests at properties within the Wychavon district.



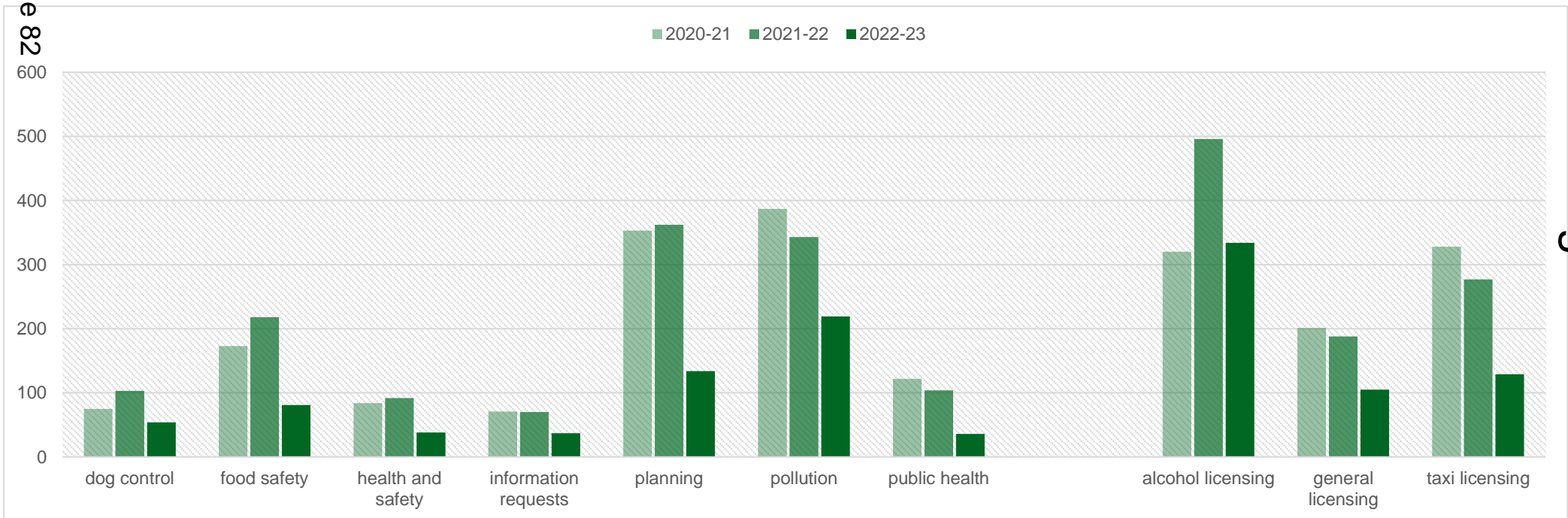
Bromsgrove

The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Bromsgrove district.

Note: The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS. The figure for the current year is a cumulative total based on each of the reporting periods. This figure will continue to increase until the end of year report is published.



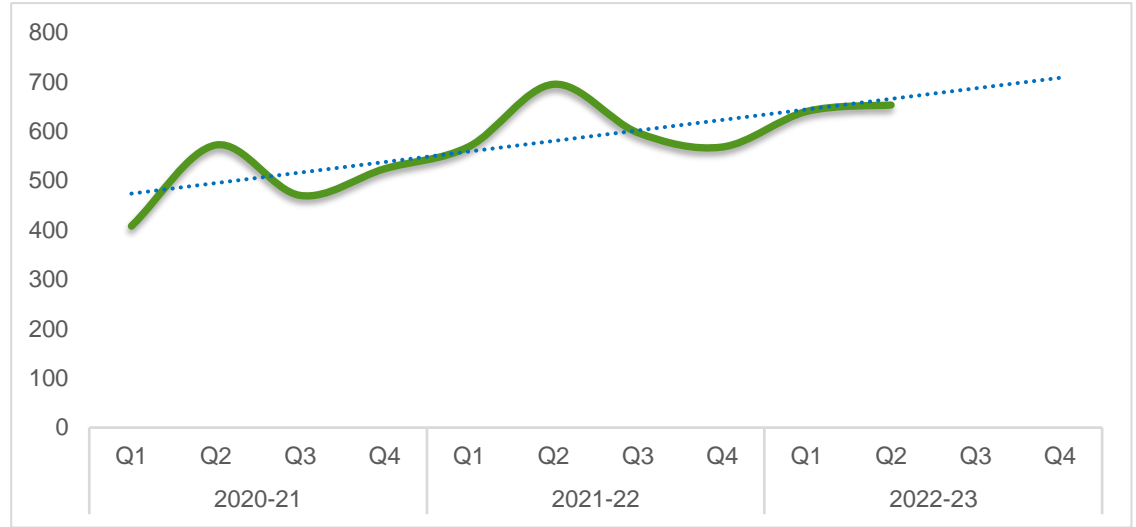
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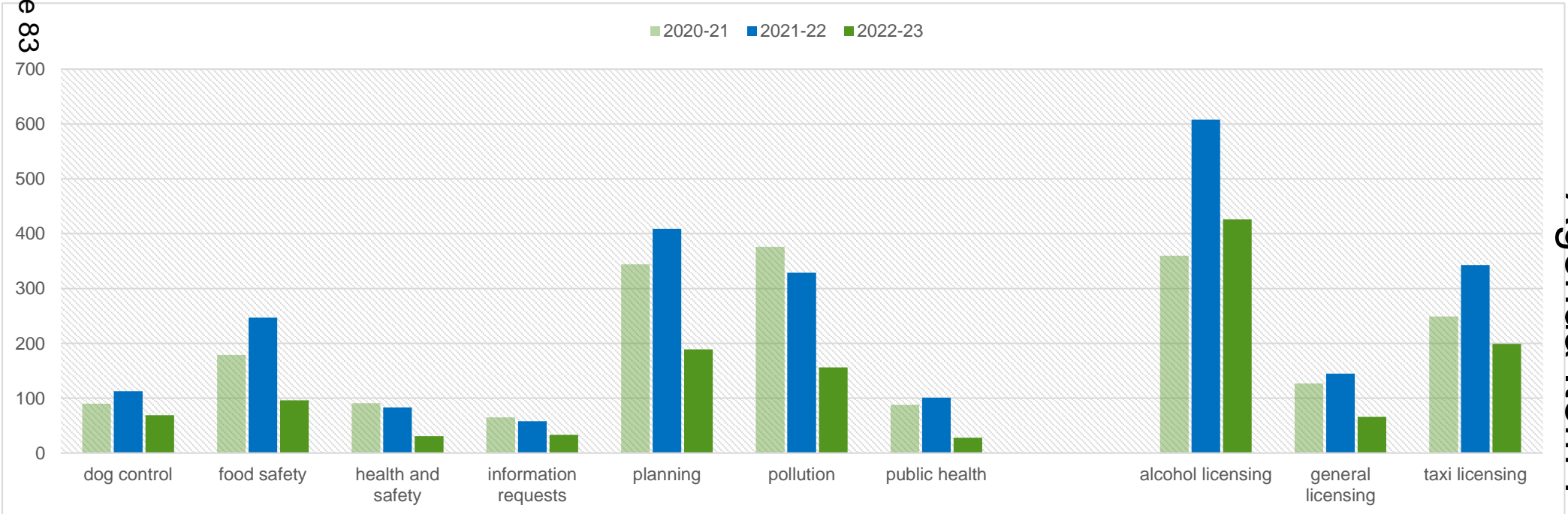
Malvern Hills

The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Malvern Hills district.

Note: The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS. The figure for the current year is a cumulative total based on each of the reporting periods. This figure will continue to increase until the end of year report is published.



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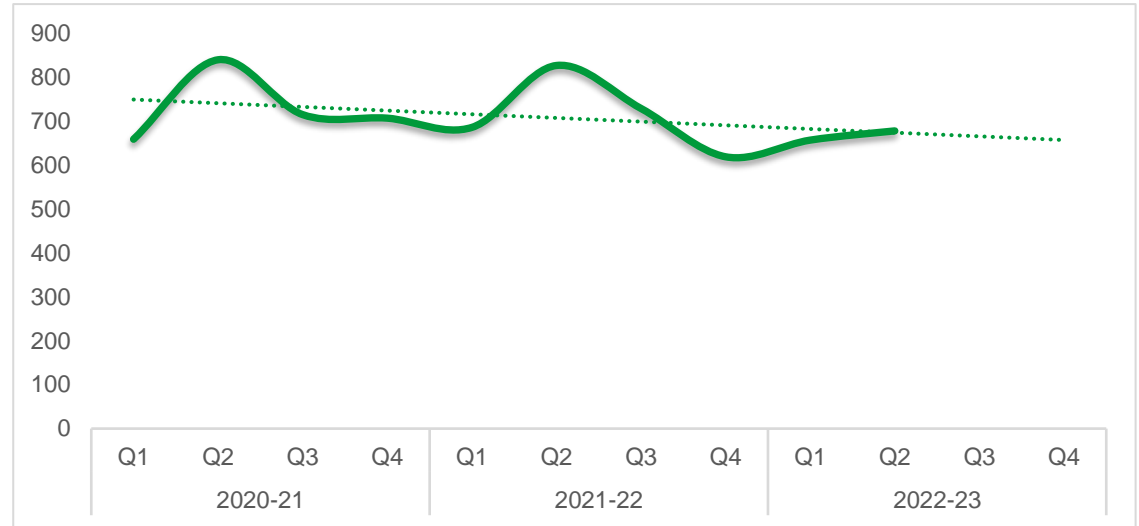


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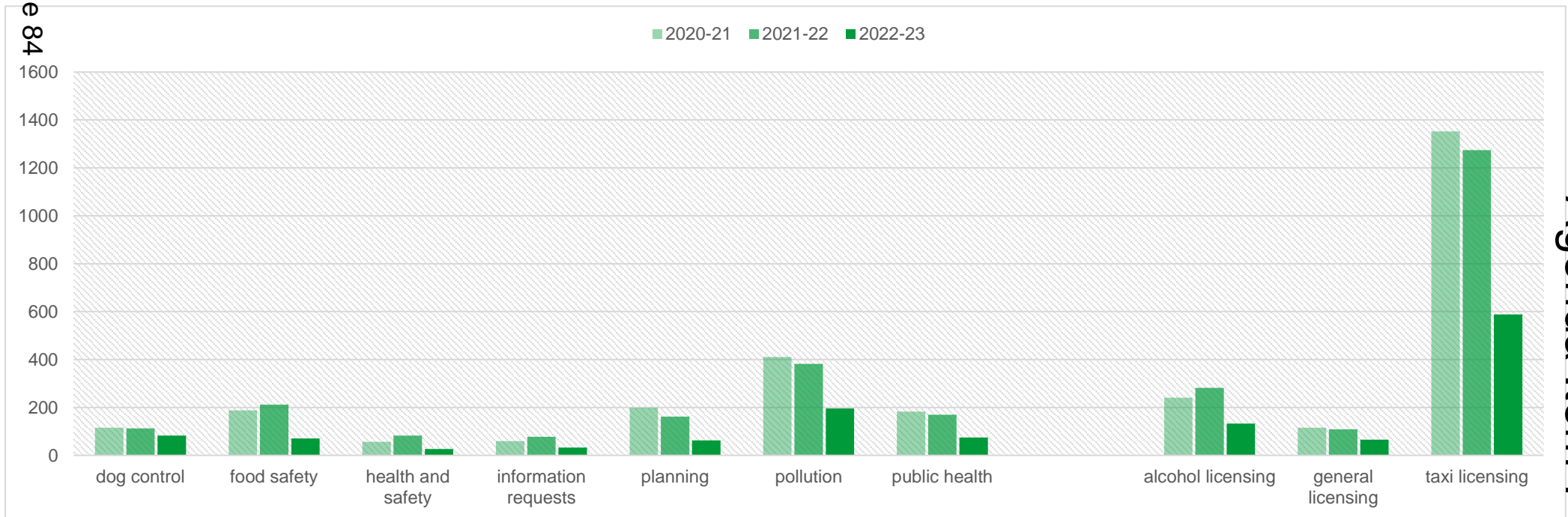
Redditch

The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Redditch district.

Note: The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS. The figure for the current year is a cumulative total based on each of the reporting periods. This figure will continue to increase until the end of year report is published.



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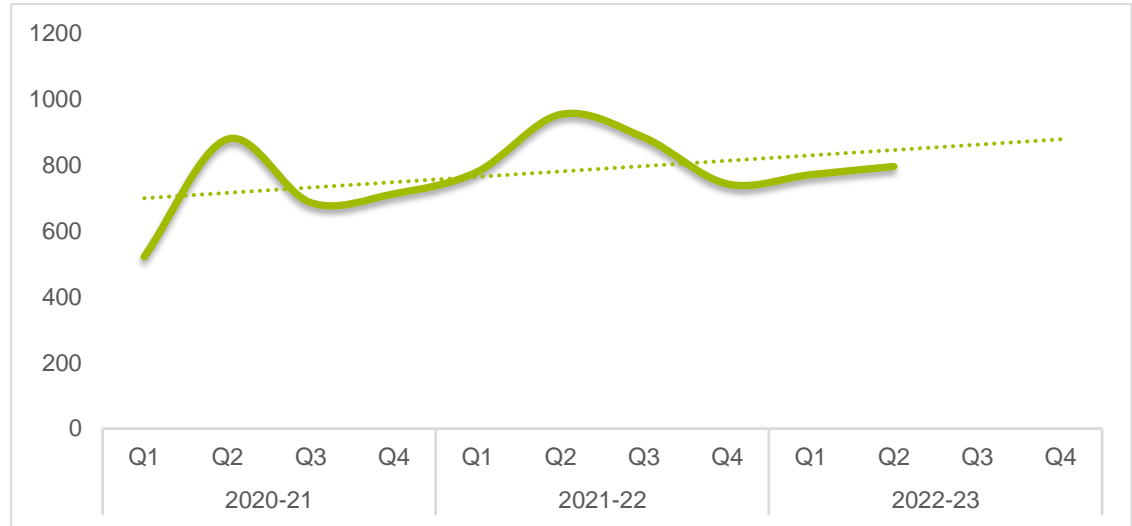


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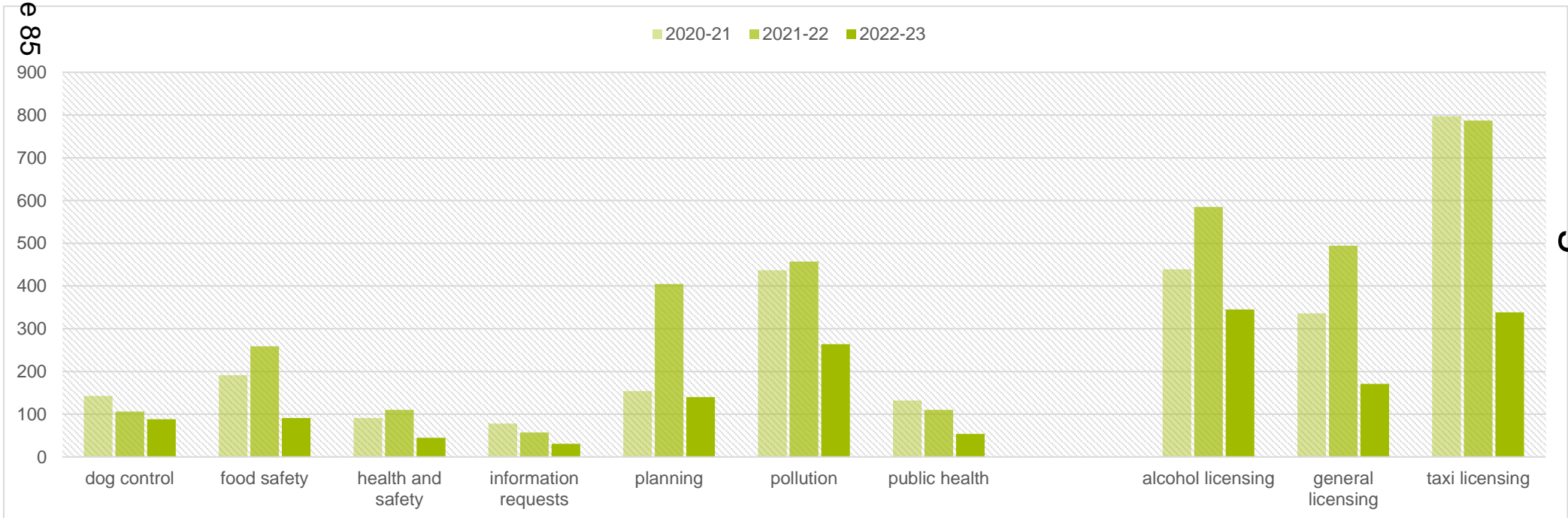
Worcester City

The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Worcester City district.

Note: The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS. The figure for the current year is a cumulative total based on each of the reporting periods. This figure will continue to increase until the end of year report is published.



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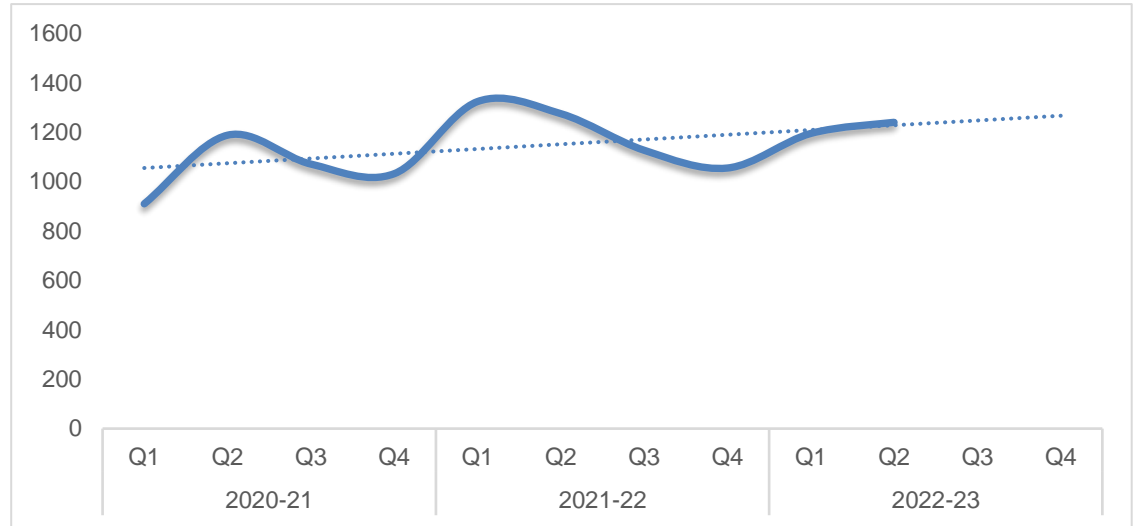


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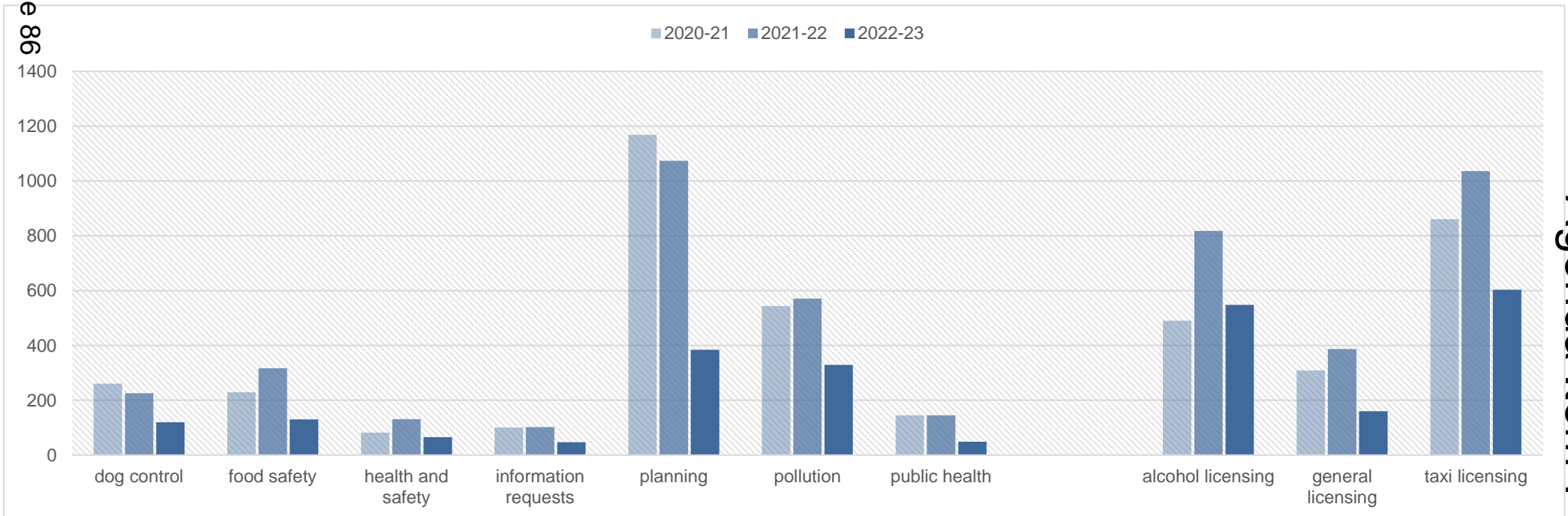
Wychavon

The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Wychavon district.

Note: The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS. The figure for the current year is a cumulative total based on each of the reporting periods. This figure will continue to increase until the end of year report is published.



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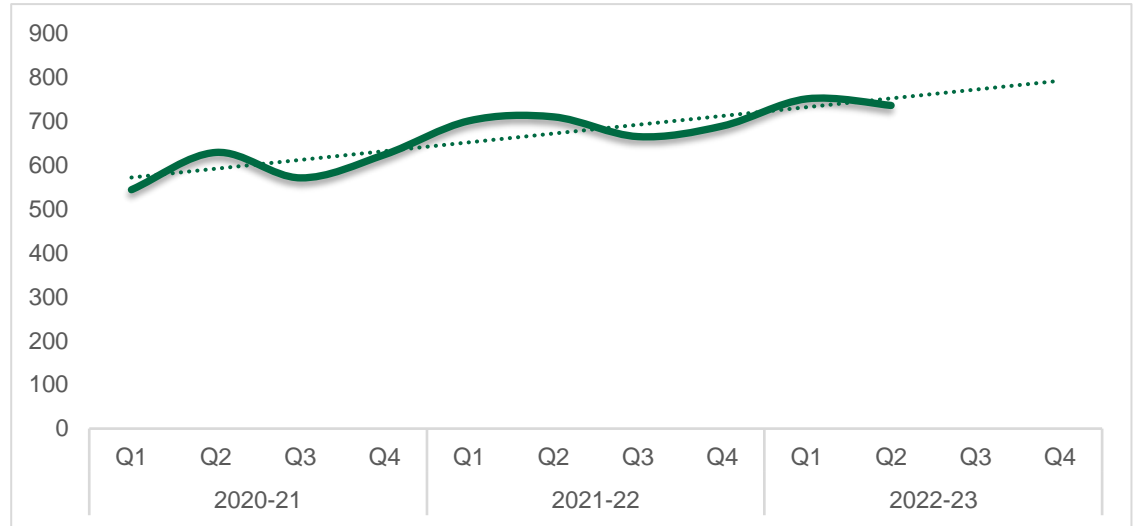


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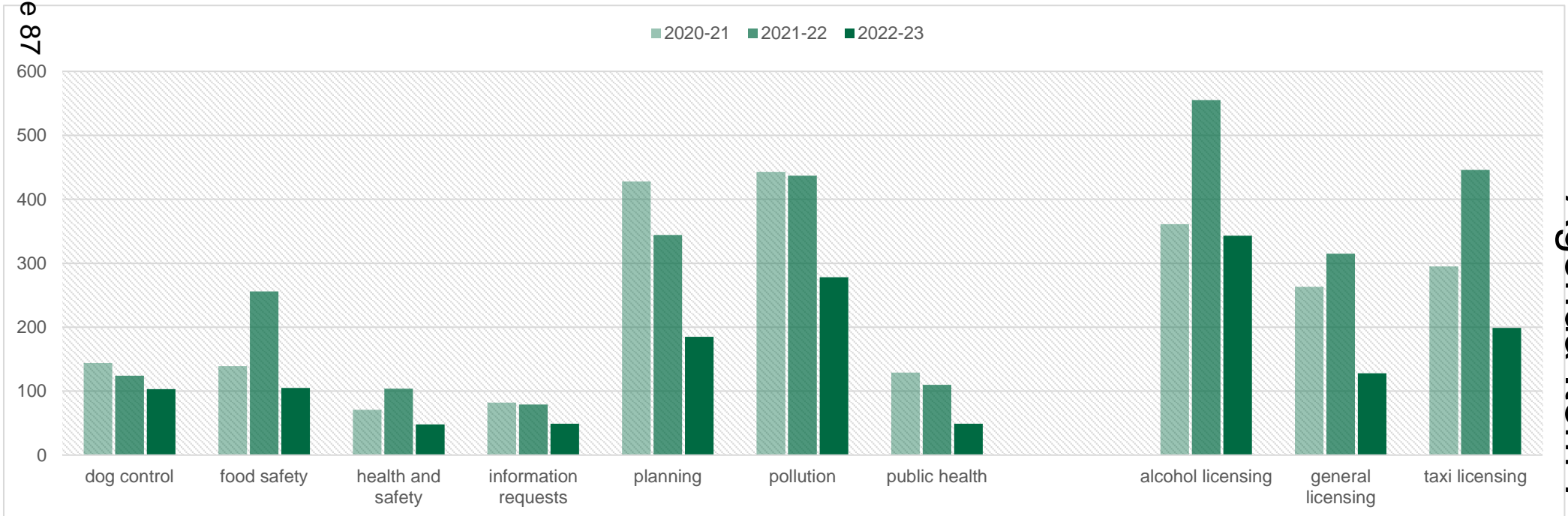
Wyre Forest

The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Wyre Forest district.

Note: The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS. The figure for the current year is a cumulative total based on each of the reporting periods. This figure will continue to increase until the end of year report is published.



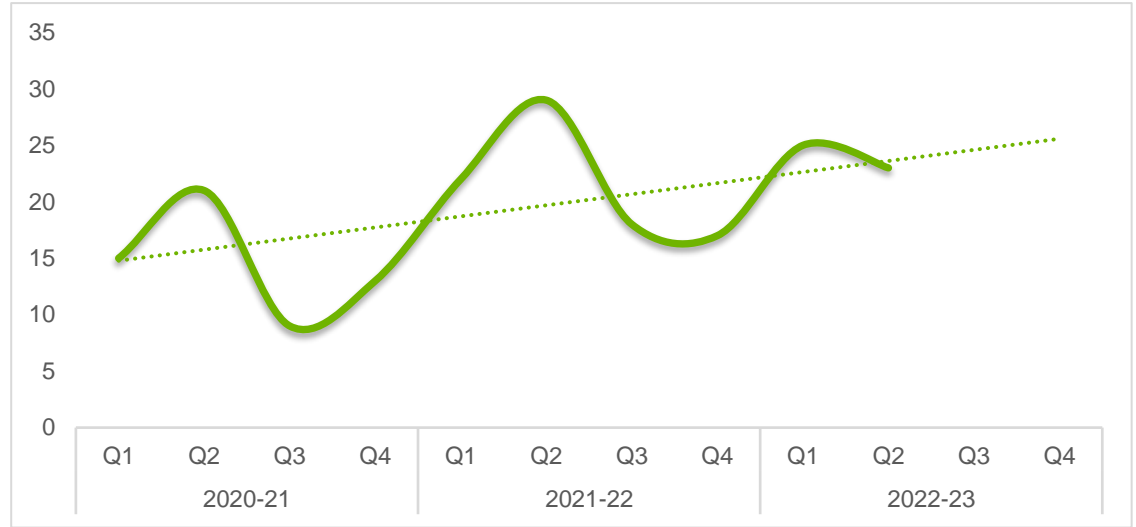
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Cheltenham

The dog control work undertaken for Cheltenham Borough Council 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. 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 due to the cost of living crisis and post-COVID behaviour changes.

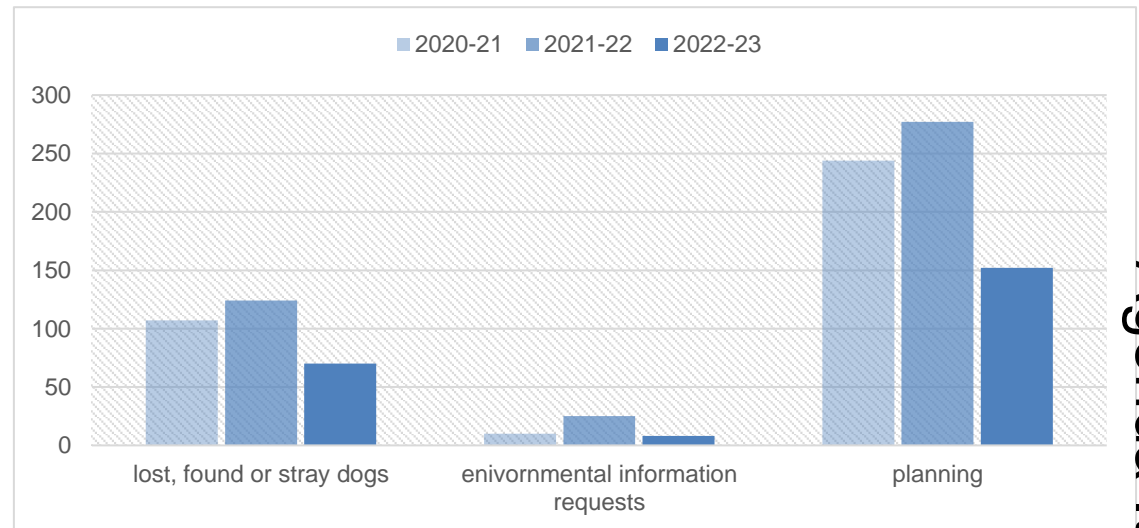
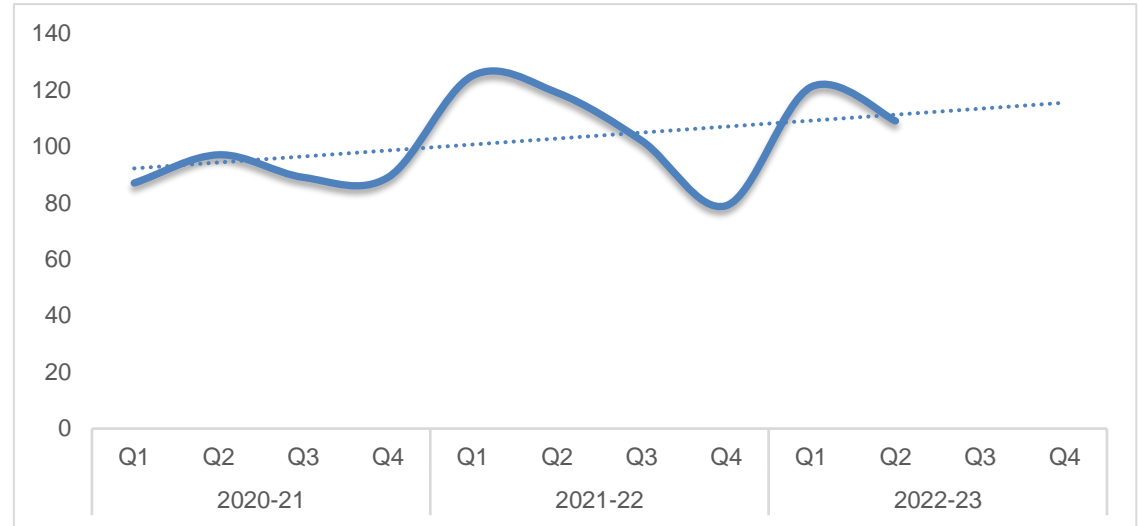


Gloucester City

The dog control work undertaken for Gloucester City Council 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. 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 due to the cost of living crisis and post-COVID behaviour changes.

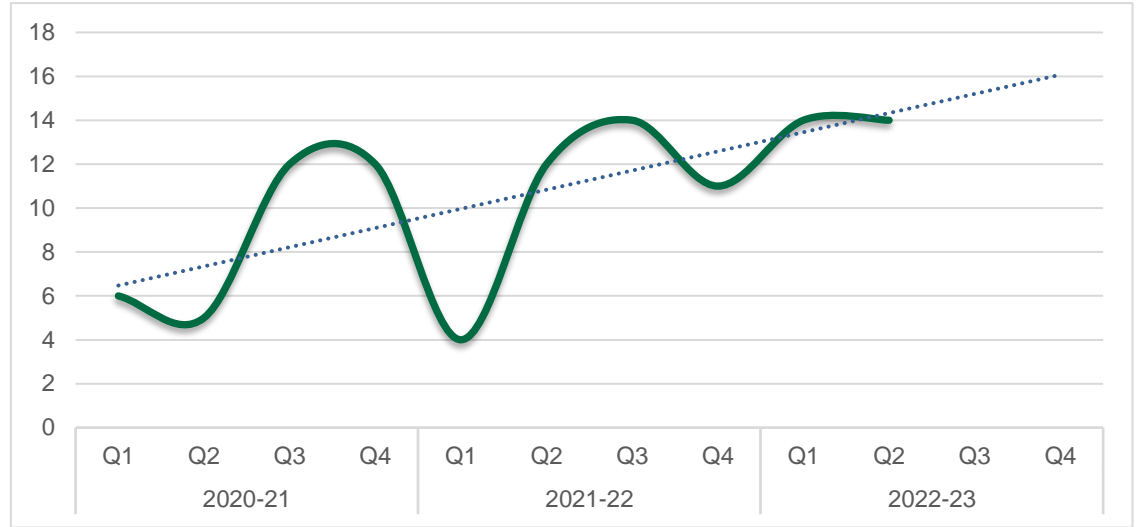
In addition to dog control activity, the service continues to deal with environmental information requests and planning enquiries.

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South Gloucestershire

South Gloucestershire, being located on the outskirts of Bristol, was subject to significant contaminative industries and activities historically. Pressures on brownfield development recently have presented the authority with a large volume of planning applications on significantly contaminated and complex sites. For a number of years now WRS has been asked to assist with this work focusing on the complex sites, so whilst numbers of referrals remain low, when presented they tend to be time consuming and complex. Work demand is dependant on resource availability at South Gloucestershire Council and, as a consequence, WRS is retained to undertake repeat work for them when this becomes an issue.

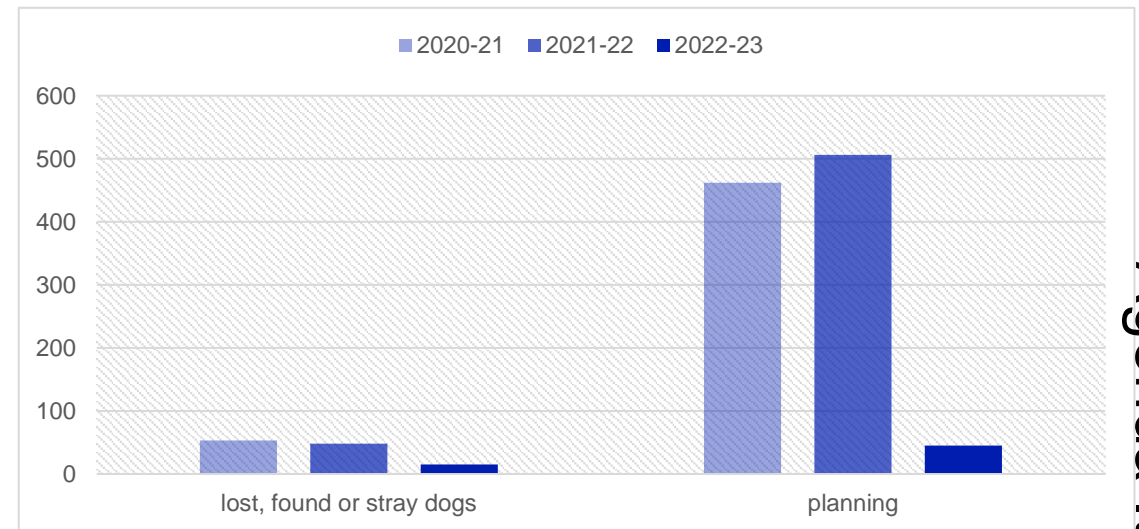
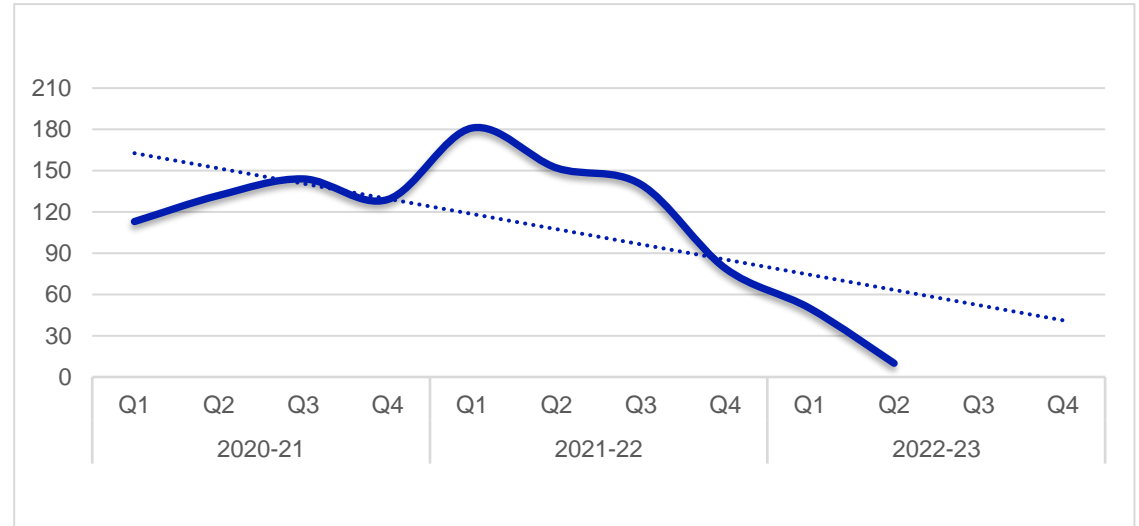


Tewkesbury

The dog control work undertaken for Tewkesbury Borough Council 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 due to the cost of living crisis and post-COVID behaviour changes.

In addition to dog control activity, the service continues to deal with planning enquiries.

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WRS Board: 17th November 2022

Update on progress of the automation project

Recommendation	Members are asked to note the report.
Introduction	<p>At the first meeting of 2022/23, members agreed to create a reserve of £150,000 from last year's underspend to fund the implementation of automation of data entry for customers, enabling a range of services to be addressed by the client entering data in forms on the WRS website, which would then upload directly into our IDOX Uniform back-office system. This includes the automation of payments for Licensing, so our host authority Bromsgrove District Council will collect fees for the 6 partners and pass money back to the other 5. Officers agreed to provide a short progress report at each Board meeting between then and the actual implementation of the project.</p>
Report	<p>Progress on making a final decision on a system has progressed. The wider management team and the IT support team have now met with all three potential identified providers and have had demonstrations and discussions with multiple different local authority users of the various systems.</p> <p>As with all these things, there are positives and negatives about each system, but on balance we found two had the most potential and had suppliers who seemed most positive about working with us and being able to deliver within our proposed timescales. The specification is being finalised and discussions are taking place with procurement colleagues that will allow us to make a direct award to the one that best fits our needs.</p> <p>In the coming few weeks we will be working with the Procurement solicitor in Bromsgrove to ensure that we follow the necessary procurement processes utilising one of the two Government portals available for direct award.</p> <p>In parallel to the wider automation project officers have also been discussing the implementation of electronic ID Cards in the taxi trades for both safeguarding and enforcement measures. As there is only one supplier on the market for this technology the procurement process is not as burdensome so officers continue to work with the supplier to ensure all the needs will be met on implementation.</p>
Contact Point	<p>Kiran Lahel Licensing and Support Services Manager Email: kiran.lahel@worsregservices.gov.uk</p>

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| Tel: 01562 738067

Worcestershire Regulatory Services

Supporting and protecting you

WRS Board:

Information Report – Flexible WRS workforce

Recommendation | **That the Board notes the Report and that members use the contents of the information provided in their own reporting back to fellow members of the partner authorities.**

Report

During the last three years, WRS has provided reports or updates to members on the various COVID-19 related workstreams. At the peak of demand, we had teams working to support businesses and the public in a variety of ways throughout the pandemic. This led to a massive recruitment drive to fill the 80 plus temporary posts created. The pandemic had created a unique situation which WRS was able to use to its benefit, in giving lots of talented, conscientious and highly skilled individuals a chance to work alongside Environmental Health and Licensing staff to get a taste of our world. Whilst much of that work has come to an end during the course of 2022 many of the staff previously employed in COVID-19 workstreams have been able and willing to be redeployed in regulatory and public health related matters utilising the skills developed and supporting the WRS budget.

Planning Enforcement

WRS continues to have the benefit of working alongside our County Council Trading Standards colleagues, which has maintained the high standard of enforcement practices to be developed and honed. Whilst the subject matters being enforced by each of the teams in the organisations may be different, the ability to investigate crime, collate evidence, produce witness statements and prepare an enforcement file is the same. These are crucial skills in adherence to our Enforcement Policy and in enabling a successful prosecution to achieve our vision, "That Worcestershire is a healthy, safe and fair place to live, where businesses can thrive".

WRS have been utilising the knowledge and skills we have in this area to support our partner authorities. During the spring we trained former contact tracing staff where required (as some had considerable experience in enforcement previously) to deliver planning enforcement work on behalf of four of the Worcestershire District Councils. Initially it was basic collation of evidence to assist the Planning Officer to make an informed decision in a timely manner. A significant backlog of casework had been created by COVID related restrictions and, in some cases, historically by capacity and recruitment issues. Whilst the work for Wychavon and Malvern Hills Districts ceased in June, we have continued to work

alongside our Planning colleagues in Bromsgrove and Redditch Councils to deliver part of this service.

This has enabled significant progress with some very complex and difficult cases. As most of these cases are still active, I am unable to provide specific examples other than provide the following statistics:

Planning Enforcement in numbers	Bromsgrove & Redditch cases (85%:15% split)	Malvern Hills	Wychavon
Cases referred to WRS to assist with investigation	220	14 (34 hours worked)	7 (17.3 hours worked)
Number of cases closed following WRS assistance	65	N/A (Activity not undertaken for this authority)	
Warning letters sent by WRS	14		
Enforcement Notices being prepared by WRS	14		
Enforcement Notices served by WRS	10		

Homes for Ukrainians

Much of the work of the COVID Advisors during the pandemic was to support businesses and members of the public with a variety of issues, concerns, and worries. The Advisors were selected for their communication skills and drive to help people. This has served well in supporting Housing colleagues at Bromsgrove, Malvern Hills, Redditch and Wychavon in delivering the work of supporting Ukrainians who have arrived in the county.

Our Housing colleagues have had to carry the burden of delivering this worthwhile work, but a significant proportion has been delivered by former COVID Advisors on the ground. In April 2022 COVID Advisors were asked to assist with the Welfare and Safeguarding visits for our hosts and guest in the Bromsgrove and Redditch districts. Our in-house Duty Officer team were also utilised to assist with some of the administration work for the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

In July two more COVID Advisors started to assist but this time in Wychavon and Malvern Hills District areas to carry out the property checks to ensure the properties were suitable for the Ukrainian guests.

COVID Advisors have always been happy to take on any new challenges and been flexible in their approach to the regular changing guidelines during COVID and now the regular change in workplace. They have adapted well in these important roles using their previous experiences dealing with a range of different people (the general public, business owners, colleagues and management across the county in the six districts, county public health and councillors) and transferable skills such as their caring, empathic approach from visiting the clinically extremely vulnerable during lockdown, helping on vaccine centres to now carrying out Safeguarding checks for the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

In the last few months there have been some complex and sensitive cases, as one would envisage in a scheme where hosts offer to open their homes to strangers who have had to leave their homes and, in many cases, suffered terribly from the conflict.

Benefit to Partners

As well as supporting our colleagues in the District Councils, we have retained staff with valuable skills and knowledge. In terms of WRS' income generation from these work strands, we have only covered costs, but it has enabled us to utilise the associated opportunities in developing and enhancing our baseline workforce with managerial experience, a variety of work and an opportunity to provide value to our society. With challenges in recruitment across the local government landscape this has been a success in retaining staff and recruitment, but it also has enabled us to deliver the standard of service expected by our residents and businesses and to showcase the adaptability and flexibility of our workforce in managing and delivering services for the benefit of all.

Mark Cox

Technical Services Manager, Worcestershire Regulatory Services
01562 738023 mark.cox@worcsergservices.gov.uk

Contact Details

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