

Public Document Pack

WORCESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILS

MEETING OF THE WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES BOARD

THURSDAY 29TH FEBRUARY 2024

AT 4.30 P.M.

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

MEMBERS: Councillor K. Taylor, Bromsgrove District Council
Councillor H. J. Jones, Bromsgrove District Council (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor J. Raine, Malvern Hills District Council
Councillor C. Palmer, Malvern Hills District Council
Councillor L. Harrison, Redditch Borough Council
Councillor J. Kane, Redditch Borough Council
Councillor J. Riaz, Worcester City Council (Chairman)
Councillor M. Allcott, Worcester City Council
Councillor R. Deller, Wychavon District Council
Councillor M. Goodge, Wychavon District Council
Councillor T. Onslow, Wyre Forest District Council
Councillor P. Harrison, Wyre Forest District Council

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence and notification of substitutes
2. Declarations of Interest

To invite Councillors to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Disclosable Interests they may have in items on the agenda, and to confirm the nature of those interests.
3. To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board held on 16th November 2023 (Pages 5 - 18)
4. Worcestershire Regulatory Service Revenue Monitoring April - Dec 2023 (Pages 19 - 26)

5. Food Service and Food Standards Agency engagement (Pages 27 - 30)
6. WRS Annual Service Plan (Pages 31 - 72)
7. Activity and Performance Data Quarter 3 2023/4 (Pages 73 - 114)
8. Progress Report on the Automation Project (Pages 115 - 116)
9. 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.
10. To consider, and if considered appropriate, to pass the following resolution to exclude the public from the meeting during the consideration of item(s) of business containing exempt information:-

"RESOLVED: that under Section 100 I of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A to the Act, as amended, the relevant paragraph of that part, in each case, being as set out below, and that it is in the public interest to do so:-

| <u>Item No.</u> | <u>Paragraph</u> |
|-----------------|------------------|
| 11 | 4 |

11. Environmental and Planning Enforcement Business Case (TO FOLLOW)

Sue Hanley
Chief Executive

Parkside
Market Street
BROMSGROVE
Worcestershire
B61 8DA

21st February 2024

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

Notes:

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



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WORCESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILS

MEETING OF THE WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES BOARD

THURSDAY, 16TH NOVEMBER 2023, AT 4.30 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors H. J. Jones (Vice-Chairman), J. Raine, C. Palmer, L. Harrison, J. Kane (during Minute No's 23/23 to 26/23), M. Allcott, R. Deller, M. Goodge, T. Onslow and P. Harrison

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

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

20/23

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J. Riaz, Worcester City Council and Councillor K. Taylor, Bromsgrove District Council.

21/23

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

22/23

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board held on 5th October were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board meeting held on 5th October 2023, be approved as a correct record.

23/23

WRS REVENUE MONITORING APRIL - SEPTEMBER 2023

The Acting Director of Finances, 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 to 16 of the main agenda report.

The report covered the period April to September 2023.

Members were informed that the detailed revenue monitoring report, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report; showed a projected outturn

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2023/24 surplus of £241k. 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, as per the original budget. There was a reserved £120k from last year surplus to accommodate an enhanced pay award in 2023/24.
- Agency staff costs were being incurred due to backfilling of staff working on other contractual work e.g., food recovery programme, contaminated land and work for other local authorities, these costs were covered by vacant posts and income generation.
- If April to September 2023 spend on pest control continued on the same trend for the rest of year, there would be an overspend on this service of £14k. WRS officers would 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 was: -

Redditch Borough Council £6k
Wychavon District Council £8k

This income was included in the income projected outturn.

- The following was the actual bereavements costs April to September 2023 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 | £3k |
| Redditch Borough Council | £14k |
| Worcester City Council | £5k |

- Appendix 2 to the report, detailed the income achieved by WRS for April to September 2023.
- Any grant funded expenditure was shown separate to the core service costs as this was not funded by the participating Councils.

The Head of Worcestershire Regulatory Services responded to a question from Members with regard to any surpluses / deficits, and in doing so explained that the Service Legal Agreement (SLA) required partners to make up any deficit, and that partners would benefit from any surplus. There was currently £137k in General Reserves and this would be the first port of call for any overspends. Following such an occurrence, if the level of overspend was significant, the ability to use the reserve would allow time for The Board to review the operation of WRS services and whether the model of operations needed to be revised ahead of a new budget being set for the following year.

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The income brought in during the first half of 2023/24 was £204k, which was slightly below the previous year. This equated to 6.8% for 2023/24 and 7.7% for 2022/23.

Members were reassured that the Technical Services Manager, WRS, continued to source new business.

RESOLVED that the Board notes the final financial position for the period April – September 2023, and that

- 1.1 partner councils be informed of their liabilities for 2023-24 in relation to Bereavements, as follows: -

| Council | Apr – Sept 23 Actual for Bereavements £000 |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Bromsgrove District Council | 3 |
| Redditch Borough Council | 14 |
| Worcester City Council | 5 |
| Total | 22 |

- 1.2 partner councils be informed of their liabilities for 2023-24 in relation to Pest Control, as follows: -

| Council | Projected Outturn for Pest Control £000 |
|---------------------------|--|
| Redditch Borough Council | 6 |
| Wychavon District Council | 8 |
| Total | 14 |

- 1.3 partner councils be informed of their liabilities for 2023-24 in relation to three additional Technical Officers, as follows: -

| Council | Estimated Projected Outturn 2023/24 Tech Officer Income Generation £000 | Estimated Projected Outturn 2023/24 Tech Officer Animal Activity £000 | Estimated Projected Outturn 2023/24 Gull Control £000 |
|----------------|--|--|--|
|----------------|--|--|--|

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| | | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Redditch Borough Council | 6 | 2 | |
| Malvern Hills District Council | 4 | 7 | |
| Worcester City Council | 6 | 2 | 65 |
| Bromsgrove District Council | 5 | 9 | |
| Wychavon District Council | 8 | 14 | |
| Wyre Forest District Council | 5 | 8 | |
| Total | 34 | 42 | 65 |

24/23

ACTIVITY & PERFORMANCE DATA - QUARTER 2 2023/24

The Head of Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) presented the Activity and Performance Data for Quarter 2 – 2023/2024; and in doing so drew Members' attention to the recommendation, as detailed on page 23 of the main agenda report. The following key points were highlighted:

Activity Data

The second quarter of 2023/4 was a relatively damp affair, which had impacted on at least one or two of the measures. Worcestershire continued to be a draw for activities with a range of events and festivals continuing to feature and now that we were beyond the pandemic, crowds appeared to be returning, but this was not to everyone's liking.

Although there was a rise in the number of complaints and enquiries between Q1 and Q2, the overall number of food safety cases recorded by WRS during the year to date was a reduction of 37% compared to 2021-22, and a reduction of 11% compared to 2022-23. In general terms, a higher proportion of food safety cases were enquiries such as requests for business advice or requests for export health certificates.

Q2 saw the rise in numbers of accidents reported slowing and the number of complaints and enquiries still increasing. Despite this, the number of health and safety at work cases recorded by WRS during the year to date was still 32% lower compared to 2021-22.

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Although applications were running more or less on trend, and complaints and enquiries were on the up, the overall number of licensing cases recorded by WRS during the year to date was an increase of 10% compared to 2021-22, but a reduction of 1% compared to 2022-23. This probably reflected the new post-pandemic normal and may be true for a number of our trends. Approximately 68% of cases were applications and registrations; with 29% of these cases relating to private hire or hackney carriage vehicle licences and 27% relating to temporary events.

Numbers of planning enquiries fell during Q2 following an increase in Q1, however, for the year to date the total still represented a reduction of 30% compared to 2021-22, but an increase of 8% compared to 2022-23. Approximately 93% of enquiries had been consultations, whilst 45% related to contaminated land. Around 16% of enquiries were completed, on a contractual basis, on behalf of other local authorities.

Interestingly, the number of information requests, which were often linked to the planning system, grew during Q2, so we may see an increase in planning work to follow this. Having said that, officers continued to report feeling that the number of general FOI requests had been higher than previously experienced.

Although the number of dog control (strays, lost dogs, etc) cases recorded by WRS fell from Q1 to Q2, overall, the figure during the year to date was an increase of 35% compared to 2021-22, but an increase of 9% compared to 2022-23. Approximately 90% of cases were related to stray or lost dogs, with 74% of these cases relating to "contained strays" (meaning dogs were found and held by a member of the public). The increase in the number of stray dogs reported across Worcestershire contrasted with pre-pandemic levels which showed a long-term trend of decreasing numbers of stray dogs being reported to the Councils. The Technical Services Manager worked hard with the kennelling contractors.

The Summer was always a busy time for nuisance work, however the poor weather this year probably led to a reduction in work volumes if not the complexity with the number of pollution cases recorded by WRS during the year to date representing a reduction of 24% compared to 2021-22, and 17% compared to 2022-23. It should be noted, however, that the better than usual Spring had led to an earlier start in the increase in workload.

Approximately 77% of cases had related to noise nuisances, with noise from domestic properties (such as noise from barking dogs or from audio-visual equipment) the most prominent sources.

Although the number of public health cases had increased between Q1 and Q2, the overall number recorded by WRS during the year to date represented a reduction of 31% compared to 2021-22 but was consistent with the figures for 2022-23. Approximately 60% of cases have related to pest control, such as enquiries about domestic treatments, enquires about sewer baiting, or complaints about pest control issues caused by the actions of neighbouring residents or businesses.

Performance

The non-business customer measure had fallen to 64.4% from 69.3% last quarter but remained above last year's out-turn figure of 59.2%. Heavy demands on resourcing in Community Environmental Health over the Summer meant we struggled to keep on top of nuisance complaints despite most officers being taken off proactive work to focus on nuisance complaints. Whilst almost 70% of people were happy with the speed of initial response, just under 60% were happy with the time it took to reach a conclusion. With this in mind there had now been some changes made to 'front of house.'

We also saw an unusual fall in business satisfaction this quarter, with the figure ending at 94.5%, two or three percentage points below where it has traditionally sat. Managers had been asked to look into this.

Compliments again significantly outnumbered complaints.

Performance on processing complete driver license renewals was at 93.9% for all authorities, which was lower than in previous years, although several individual authorities remained at 100%. Licensing was quite pressured during the Summer with staffing capacity (due to staff holidays) so this slight downturn in performance was not unexpected.

The data on defective vehicles related to situations where the vehicle was recorded as having been suspended either by the district garage on inspection or by an officer. This may follow a reported accident taking the vehicle outside the acceptable standards, or even when the vehicle was submitted for its routine 6-monthly check. In recent reporting periods we have seen an increase in the number of defective vehicles reported under this indicator, driven mainly by higher numbers in one of the six fleets. This had continued and, by the end of Q2 this year, 34 vehicles were suspended in the period, with the majority belonging to our one of our larger fleet areas. Even with this number, only 2.19% of the fleet county-wide were recorded as potentially problematic. Members were asked to note that there were approximately 1,500 licensed vehicles around Worcestershire. Officer would continue to re-enforce the

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need to ensure vehicles were always fit for use on the road with drivers and operators.

Staff sickness had increased from 0.76 days per FTE to 1.42 days per FTE cumulative for the year. Current sickness levels were lower than the same period in the last 2 years.

The overall rate of noise complaints against population was 0.79. This was slightly lower than the figure at Q2 in the most recent years. It may be influenced by the slightly lower rate of complaint due to the poor summer weather.

The rate of hospitality businesses not upholding the 4 licensing objectives was 5%. This was roughly in line with 3 of the 5 previously recorded figures at this point.

Income brought in during the first half of 2023/24 was £204,718, which was slightly below last year (£232,520,) but still significantly up on the 2-years before this.

The Technical Services Manager, WRS, responded to questions from Members with regards to pest control and in doing so highlighted that traditionally Redditch Borough Council (RBC) and Wychavon District Council (WDC) had a higher demand for the service. Historically, RBC had provided free rat treatments for all. In respect of WDC, officers were unsure of the specific issue / demand on the service, but it was more localised in deprived areas and was also a subsidised service.

The Head of WRS noted the comments made by some of the Board Members, as follows:-

- To ask if it was possible to show figures on the graphs included in the report, where relevant; or amend the scales on the axis; and
- To ask if it was possible to provide some longer-term trend data on some of the measures, extending periods beyond the 3-years currently shown in the Activity Data Report, emailing these out to all Board Members should this be possible.

Members expressed their thanks to officers for the detailed information within the report.

RESOLVED that the Activity and Performance Data Quarter 2 – 2023/2024, be noted and that Members use the contents of the report in their own reporting back to their respective partner authority.

25/23

WRS BUDGETS 2024/25 - 2026/27

The Acting Director, Finances, Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) and Redditch Borough Council (RBC), introduced the report and in doing drew Members' attention to the recommendations, as detailed on pages 63 to 65 of the main agenda report.

Members were informed that, as detailed in the report, that there was a gross expenditure budget of £4,572k and a total income budget of £961k.

The revenue budget and partner percentage allocations for 2024/25 onwards, was detailed in the table at recommendation 1.3, page 63 of the main agenda report.

Members attention was drawn to the WRS Budgets 2024/25 information, as detailed on page 66 of the main agenda report and the following assumptions made in relation to the projections, as follows:-

- The enhanced pay award for 2023/24 was reserved from 2022/23 surplus. WRS were not able to fund this increase year on year, therefore an increase in partner funding would be required.
- 3% pay award across all staff for 2024/25, 2% for 2025/26 & 2026/27.
- Increase in Rent of £4.6k in 2024/25, a further 4% in 2025/2026 and 2026/2027.
- Increase in ICT Hosting of £4.4k, a further 4% in 2025/26 and 2026/27.
- Increase in Support Hosting of £4.9k in 2024-25, a further 3% in 2025/26 and 2026-27.
- 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 to be paid by all partners.

Members were asked to note that, in addition to the base budget there were three additional technical officers working on income generation, animal activity and gull control. Officers were unable to include these officers into the base budget as the income generation officer was 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 was different to the agreed partner recharge allocations

The Acting Director, Finances, (BDC) and (RBC) further highlighted to the Board that, following discussions, Partner Officers of the Board had agreed to support Worcester City Council to achieve its budgetary requirements for 2024/5; and that the starting point for their contribution before the additions for salary pressures, etc, would be £30K less than

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the previous year. Officers had identified several areas where work might be varied and the detail of this would be dealt with at officer level in the coming months, ahead of the new financial year.

Following on from this, Councillor T. Onslow, Wyre Forest District Council asked for a further explanation on the reduction of £30k for Worcester City Council; and further highlighted that Wyre Forest District Council had a budget deficit to address and that they would be looking across all service areas for savings.

The Acting Director, Finances, (BDC) and (RBC) explained that Worcester City Council had approached Chief Officers 3 / 4 months previously looking for reductions. Therefore, the Head of WRS had looked at services to see what WRS could deliver without affecting other partner authorities.

The Head of WRS further explained that officers had discussed the service areas that could be reduced. Licensing was required by law to be cost neutral so was not included. Other service areas were reviewed to determine if savings could be made for one partner without impacting on the others. Following these discussions, it had become apparent how heavily integrated and interconnected many of the common service areas like food inspection and nuisance investigation were, making it very difficult to segregate for one partner authority.

Officers had looked at the work carried out on behalf of Worcester City Council and the other partners and had identified a small number of areas where work levels might be adjusted downwards for Worcester, without this impacting on work undertaken for the other partner authorities and outside agencies, as this was key to continued income generation. Members were reassured that there was only a small amount of risk outside of the partnership, and that he was confident that this would not have an impact on any of the other partner authorities.

Councillor T. Onslow, Wyre Forest District Council, further added that Wyre Forest DC could not sign off the WRS Budgets for 2024/25 – 2026/27 at this stage, as their authority was also looking at savings during this 3-year period, so may have to ask for savings similar to those of Worcester City Council.

The Head of WRS stated that neither he nor the Partner Officers had been made aware that Wyre Forest District Council needed to look for savings in coming year, 2024/25.

The Head of WRS further clarified that, as detailed in the Legal Agreement between the partners and the 'Proceedings at Meetings', any recommendations before the Board would be decided by a majority of the Members of the Board present and voting, so if the other authorities were content, their Members could vote in favour and the budgets would pass to their councils for ratification of their relevant contributions.

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However, the Head of WRS added that, whilst it was not ideal, the agreement also provided an opportunity for authorities, in this case Wyre Forest, to come back to the Board with an agreed revised budget contribution at the meeting of the Board on 15th February 2024 so that the budget could be signed off ahead of the March date mentioned in the legal agreement.

The Head of WRS further explained that the WRS Budgets 2024/25 – 2026/27 if agreed by a majority vote of the Board at this stage, would mean that the partners voting in favour could then proceed with the figures agreed for their contribution, presenting them during the decision-making process at their individual budget setting meetings.

Councillor T. Onslow, Wyre Forest District Council, thanked the Head of WRS for his explanation but stated that she could not agree with the recommendations as they stood and would go back to the Cabinet Members, with a view to considering what may be affordable in the coming period. Councillor T. Onslow asked if the Head of WRS would meet with her to explain what savings might be made but also what impacts this might have on residents and businesses in their district.

The Head of WRS noted this and suggested that a separate meeting could be arranged at Wyre Forest House with the Wyre Forest representative of the Partner Officers Group, with this being followed up with the wider Partner Officer members of the Board ahead of the February meeting.

On being put to the vote, with Councillors T. Onslow and P. Harrison, Wyre Forest District Council abstaining, it was

RECOMMENDED that partner authorities approve the following for 2024/25 - 2026/27:-

- 1.1 Approve the 2024/25 gross expenditure budget of £4,572k as shown at Appendix 1 to the report,
- 1.2 Approve the 2024/25 income budget of £991k as shown at Appendix 1, to the report;
- 1.3 Approve the revenue budget and partner percentage allocations for 2024/25 as follows: -

| Council | £'000 | Revised % |
|--------------------------------|--------------|------------------|
| Bromsgrove District Council | 518 | 14.45 |
| Malvern Hills District Council | 471 | 13.13 |
| Redditch Borough Council | 633 | 17.68 |
| Worcester City | 575 | 16.07 |

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| | | |
|------------------------------|--------------|-------|
| Council | | |
| Wychavon District | 840 | 23.43 |
| Wyre Forest District Council | 546 | 15.24 |
| Total | 3,583 | |

1.4 Approve the additional partner liabilities for 2024/25 in relation to unavoidable salary pressure, as follows: -

| Council | 2023/24 £'000 | 2024/25 £'000 |
|--------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Bromsgrove District Council | 17 | 16 |
| Malvern Hills District Council | 15 | 15 |
| Redditch Borough Council | 20 | 20 |
| Worcester City Council | 18 | 18 |
| Wychavon District Council | 27 | 27 |
| Wyre Forest District Council | 18 | 17 |
| Total | 115 | 113 |

1.5 Approve the additional partner liabilities for 2024/25 in relation to increase in hosting costs, as follows: -

| Council | Increase in Rent £000 | Increase in ICT Hosting £000 | Increase in Support Hosting £000 |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Bromsgrove District Council | 0.7 | 0.6 | 0.7 |
| Malvern Hills District Council | 0.6 | 0.6 | 0.6 |
| Redditch Borough Council | 0.8 | 0.8 | 0.9 |
| Worcester City Council | 0.7 | 0.7 | 0.8 |
| Wychavon District Council | 1.1 | 1.1 | 1.1 |
| Wyre Forest District Council | 0.7 | 0.7 | 0.8 |
| Total | 4.6 | 4.5 | 4.9 |

1.6 Approve the additional partner liabilities for 2024/25 in relation to three Technical Officers, as follows: -

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| Council | Tech Officer Income Generation £000 | Tech Officer Animal Activity £000 | Tech Officer Gull Control £000 |
|--------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Bromsgrove District Council | 5 | 8 | |
| Malvern Hills District Council | 5 | 14 | |
| Redditch Borough Council | 7 | 2 | |
| Worcester City Council | 6 | 3 | 35 |
| Wychavon District Council | 8 | 12 | |
| Wyre Forest District Council | 6 | 5 | |
| Total | 37 | 44 | 35 |

26/23

AUTOMATION PROJECT UPDATE

The Licensing and Support Services Manager, Worcestershire Regulatory Services, briefly reminded Members that an update had recently been provided at the meeting of the Board on 5th October 2023.

Due to the short time since the last report to the Board, the amount of change that could be reported was limited. Officers continued to quality check additional forms whilst testing on the financial system took place; and planning for the second phase continued.

Now officers had the merchant ID, the team had been liaising with Adelante (the financial payment platform) who were now assessing how to attach the ID to the appropriate items in the online store. This would allow the appropriate monies to be transferred to Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) and then redistributed to the relevant partner authority.

Sample files had already been exchanged to ensure monies received into Tech-One, the BDC finance system, related to the item details that were on the interface file. The final version could then be loaded onto the Tech One system.

Progress

Meetings had been set up with the Communications Team to discuss the soft launch strategy of the plan, so that this could be discussed with stakeholder groups in testing phase two. It was important that all of the

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information that customers required to complete the forms was available at this stage. This would include: -

- Website Update
- FAQ's – Frequently asked questions
- Guidance Documents

Some of these may require changing or editing throughout the testing stages.

Sadly, several obstacles had arisen that the team continued to address by working with our external providers. Firstly, the address base gazetteer had required a software update to ensure the most current correct addresses were being used in the system. This would be normal for most address-based systems that, from time to time the associated gazetteer needed to be updated. This should ensure that newer addresses were easy for applicants to put into the system.

Secondly, there had been a delay in implementing the licensing connector from IDOX, our long-standing database supplier, which was required to ensure the correct district was paid once an applicant had selected the district from a drop-down list. Officers had been informed that this would be available as part of a IDOX upgrade in January 2024. Clearly, officers wanted to ensure that the process was seamless and would not consider moving to live until they knew that the right monies would be identifiable and portable to the correct partner authority.

In parallel to the wider automation project, officers continued to assess the roll out of electronic ID Cards in the taxi trade for both safeguarding and enforcement measures and this had progressed. IT colleagues at Wyre Forest continued to work on the dashboard implementation and were now starting to trial this. Once officers understand the timeframes of this in more detail, a plan would be executed for implementation across the County.

The Technical Services Manager. WRS, responded to questions from the Board and in doing so explained that, with regard to the issues around addresses and new addresses, WRS did not own the data, the data was owned by each partner authority, who updated their data set from time to time with the associated gazetteer. Therefore, the associated gazetteer needed to be updated as WRS did not have an up-to-date version. There had also been an issue with the system caused by what WRS officers thought was an IT 'bug'. This meant that officers had been unable to add any current gazetteer updates until this was resolved. Eventually, the IT software provider agreed with WRS

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diagnosis of the issue and sought to resolve the situation in their system. Once the patch is applied to the system to fix the 'bug', WRS would be able to update the gazetteer to the most up to date version. Members were reassured that any costs associated with the "bug" resolution would be met by IDOX.

In response to a query on the 'go live' date, the Licensing and Support Services Manager, WRS, stated that she had hoped that the 'go live' date of April 2024 would still be met.

RESOLVED that the Progress Report on the Automation Project be noted.

The meeting closed at 5.17 p.m.

Chairman



WRS Board 29th February 2023

WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES REVENUE MONITORING April – Dec 2023

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board:

- 1.1 Note the final financial position for the period April – Dec 2023
- 1.2 That partner councils are informed of their liabilities for 2023-24 in relation to Bereavements

| Council | Apr–Dec 23 Actual for Bereavements £000 |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Bromsgrove District Council | 4 |
| Malvern Hills District Council | 1 |
| Redditch Borough Council | 17 |
| Worcester City Council | 10 |
| Total | 32 |

- 1.3 That partner councils are informed of their liabilities for 2023-24 in relation to Pest Control

| Council | Projected Outturn for Pest Control £000 |
|---------------------------|--|
| Redditch Borough Council | 7 |
| Wychavon District Council | 8 |
| Total | 15 |



Agenda Item 4

1.4 That partner councils are informed of their liabilities for 2023-24 in relation to three additional Technical Officers

| Council | Estimated Projected Outturn 2023/24 Tech Officer Income Generation £000 | Estimated Projected Outturn 2023/24 Tech Officer Animal Activity £000 | Estimated Projected Outturn 2023/24 Gull Control £000 |
|--------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Bromsgrove District Council | 5 | 9 | |
| Malvern Hills District Council | 5 | 7 | |
| Redditch Borough Council | 6 | 2 | |
| Worcester City Council | 6 | 3 | 65 |
| Wychavon District Council | 8 | 14 | |
| Wyre Forest District Council | 5 | 8 | |
| Total | 35 | 43 | 65 |

Contribution to Priorities

The robust financial management arrangements ensure the priorities of the service can be delivered effectively.

Introduction/Summary

This report presents the financial position for Worcestershire Regulatory Services for the period April – Dec 2023.

Background

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

Report

The following reports are included for Board's Attention:

- Revenue Monitoring - April – Dec 23 – Appendix 1
- Income Breakdown - April – Dec 23 – Appendix 2

Agenda Item 4

Revenue Monitoring

The detailed revenue report is attached at Appendix 1. This shows a projected outturn 2023/24 surplus of £3k. It is appreciated this is an estimation to the year-end based on following assumptions:

- The pay award has now been agreed and included in the revenue monitoring statement. We reserved £120k from last year surplus to accommodate the enhanced pay award in 23-24.
- Agency staff costs are being incurred due to backfilling of staff working on other contractual work eg food recovery programme, contaminated land & work for other local authorities, these costs are covered by vacant posts & income generation.
- If April to Dec 23 spend on pest control continues on the same trend for the rest of year, there will be a overspend on this service of £15k. 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 | £7k |
| Wychavon District Council | £8k |

This income is included in the income projected outturn.

- The following is the actual bereavements costs Apr – Dec 23 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 | £4k |
| Malvern Hills District Council | £1k |
| Redditch Borough Council | £17k |
| Worcester City Council | £10k |

This income is included in the income projected outturn.

- Appendix 2 shows the detail of the income achieved by WRS April – Dec 23
- Any grant funded expenditure is shown separate to the core service costs as this is not funded by the participating Councils.

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

WRS - Profit & Loss Report 2023/24
Total WRS Dec 23 / Period 9 - 23/24

| | Revised Full Year Budget 23-24 | Revised Budget - Apr - Dec 23 | Committed Expenditure Apr - Dec 23 | Variance | Qtr 3 Projected outturn | Qtr 3 Projected Outturn Variance | Comments |
|---|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|-------------|----------------------------|--|--|
| | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | |
| Direct Expenditure | | | | | | | |
| Employees | | | | | | | |
| Salary | 3,524 | 2,643 | 2,517 | -126 | 3,401 | -123 | Covered by income generation from Ukrainian & Planning Enforcement Work |
| Agency Staff | 25 | 0 | 228 | 228 | 322 | 297 | Covered by income generation work, including work for other local authorities, increase from last quarter is extension of food agency resource |
| Employee Insurance | 25 | 18 | 17 | -2 | 22 | -2 | |
| Sub-Total - Employees | 3,574 | 2,661 | 2,762 | 101 | 3,746 | 172 | |
| Premises | | | | | | | |
| Rent / Hire of Premise | 74 | 56 | 56 | 1 | 76 | 1 | |
| Cleaning | 1 | 1 | 0 | -0 | 0 | -0 | |
| Utilities | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Sub-Total - Premises | 75 | 56 | 57 | 0 | 76 | 1 | |
| Transport | | | | | | | |
| Vehicle Hire | 20 | 15 | 11 | -4 | 12 | -8 | |
| Vehicle Fuel | 8 | 6 | 3 | -3 | 6 | -3 | |
| Road Fund Tax | 1 | 1 | 0 | -0 | 1 | 0 | |
| Vehicle Insurance | 5 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 5 | 0 | |
| Vehicle Maintenance | 3 | 2 | 1 | -1 | 2 | -2 | |
| Car Allowances | 56 | 42 | 31 | -11 | 41 | -15 | |
| Sub-Total - Transport | 92 | 69 | 50 | -19 | 65 | -27 | |
| Supplies and Services | | | | | | | |
| Furniture & Equipment | 39 | 29 | 58 | 28 | 79 | 40 | AQ Monitoring Station £22k, Income recovered from Wychavon, PACE Act Recorders £9k, Food monitoring equipment £8k |
| Clothes, uniforms and laundry | 2 | 1 | 1 | -1 | 3 | 1 | |
| Printing & Photocopying | 17 | 13 | 10 | -3 | 15 | -2 | |
| Postage | 11 | 8 | 10 | 2 | 11 | 0 | |
| ICT | 67 | 50 | 48 | -2 | 78 | 11 | Laptop Refresh |
| Telephones | 21 | 16 | 22 | 6 | 38 | 17 | Mobile Refresh |
| Training & Seminars | 22 | 17 | 12 | -5 | 19 | -4 | |
| Insurance | 20 | 15 | 10 | -5 | 15 | -5 | |
| Third Party Payments | 194 | 145 | 146 | 1 | 195 | 1 | |
| Sub-Total - Supplies & Service | 393 | 295 | 317 | 22 | 452 | 59 | |
| Contractors | | | | | | | |
| Dog Warden | 121 | 91 | 171 | 80 | 243 | 122 | Additional contractors due to new contract, recovered in income |
| Pest Control | 105 | 79 | 80 | 1 | 120 | 15 | Overspend within pest control, funded by Redditch & Wychavon and shown in income |
| Taxi / Alcohol / & Other Licensing | 70 | 53 | 85 | 32 | 101 | 31 | |
| Other contractors/consultants | 3 | 2 | 1 | -1 | 3 | 0 | |
| Water Safety | 5 | 4 | 7 | 3 | 9 | 4 | |
| Food Safety | 1 | 1 | 0 | -1 | 0 | -1 | |
| Environmental Protection | 12 | 9 | 41 | 32 | 42 | 30 | Bereavements recovered in income |
| Grants / Subscriptions | 13 | 9 | 11 | 2 | 15 | 2 | |
| Advertising, Publicity and Promotion | 6 | 4 | 2 | -2 | 6 | 1 | |
| Sub-Total | 335 | 251 | 398 | 147 | 539 | 204 | |
| Income | | | | | | | |
| Training Courses / Bereavement / Works in Default / Sewer Baiting etc | -703 | -527 | -843 | -315 | -1,116 | -413 | See append 2 |
| Sub-Total | -703 | -527 | -843 | -315 | -1,116 | -413 | |
| Overall Total | 3,766 | 2,805 | 2,741 | -64 | 3,762 | -3 | |

Notes:-

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Worcestershire Regulatory Services Income 2023/24

| Income from Partners | April to Dec 23 |
|--|-------------------|
| | £ |
| Budget | 2,805,478 |
| Pension Backfunding | 26,648 |
| Bereavement/ Public Burials | 31,931 |
| Marlpool - Redditch | 2,070 |
| Pest Control Overspend - Wychavon & Redditch | 11,008 |
| Employee for Animal Activity | 32,360 |
| Employee for Income Generation Officer | 26,845 |
| Additional Gull Work - Worcs City | 45,000 |
| Tameside - Subs to Anti Fraud Network - Worcs City | 1,700 |
| Taxi unmet demand surveys - Worcs City | 29,950 |
| Contaminated Land Work - Worcs City | 9,750 |
| Air Quality Monitoring, Worcester Road - Wychavon | 23,606 |
| S106 towards air quality monitoring - Wychavon | 0 |
| Idox support - Bromsgrove & Redditch | 705 |
| Planning Enforcement - Bromsgrove & Redditch | 163,070 |
| Ukrainian Support Work - Bromsgrove & Redditch | 81,262 |
| | 3,291,382 |
| | 3,291,382 |
| | |
| Grant Income | |
| Severn Trent - Sewer Baiting | 2,986 |
| | 2,986 |
| | 2,986 |
| | |
| Other Income | |
| Stray Dog Income | 132,061 |
| Worcester County - Mgmt, Legal & Admin Support | 44,259 |
| County - Safety at Sport Grounds | 15,000 |
| Planning Support Work | 30,729 |
| Contaminated Land Work | 20,532 |
| PPC Work | 13,426 |
| Primary Authority work | 19,300 |
| Private Water Supplies | 4,714 |
| Pest Control - Bath & North East Somerset Council / Contributions from residents | 25,268 |
| Training / Risk Assessments of Water Supplies / Burials etc | 6,062 |
| Vet Fee Inspection Costs Recovered | 32,485 |
| Licensing - Pre-App Advice | 601 |
| Food Training Courses / Certificates / Food Hygiene Rating / Pre-Opening | 9,262 |
| | 353,699 |
| | 353,699 |
| | |
| Total Income Apr - Dec 23 | 3,648,067 |
| | 3,648,067 |
| | |
| 2023/24 Base Budget from Partners | -2,805,478 |
| | |
| Total Income Excluding Budget | 842,589 |

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WRS Board

Date: 29th February 2024

Food Service and Food Standards Agency engagement

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Recommendation | Members are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">(i) Note the report.(ii) Agree the consequent increase in establishment that flows from the funding uplift agreed by the partners. |
| Background | <p>The Food Standards Agency is the main competent authority for food controls in England. The food function is devolved in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. The Agency has been pushing local authorities recently to increase their commitments to food law enforcement and to align activities more closely with the letter of the Food Law Code of Practice issued under section 40 of the Food Safety Act 1990. After engagement with senior officers and lead members, the partners have agreed to an uplift in the WRS budget specifically for Food Safety Act enforcement. This paper explains the detail of this and how the additional expenditure will be deployed.</p> |
| Report | <p>In line with the Systems Thinking approach taken in these functional areas by the partners since 2011, our shared service has been piloting alternative approaches as financial pressures on local authorities forced the partners to make difficult decisions in relation to support for many of their services over an extended period. The Agency was made aware of WRS's experiments at the time and expressed some interest in the work being done, albeit the Agency would not endorse any changes that occurred, no matter how beneficial.</p> <p>During the audit visit in 2017, our officers were left with the clear impression that the Agency was moving in the direction of accepting that intelligence-driven regulatory services offer the most cost effective and efficient form of control model available. This clearly seemed to be the direction of travel in the reviews of the Food Standards and then Food Hygiene codes, which were clearly labelled as seeking to build the role of intelligence into process.</p> <p>Following the initial consultation on the revision to the Food Hygiene code, the Agency has decided not to go forward with further change before 2027. At the same time, its performance teams have indicated an expectation that authorities that have chosen to move away from aspects of the code will be expected to re-align their activities to be more reflective of the letter of what is required. This means relying less on intelligence and going back to increased levels of traditional inspection and alternative enforcement approaches within the Code.</p> |



Agenda Item 5

The Food Hygiene Code of Practice and issues raised.

The Food Hygiene Code of Practice is made under section 40 of the Food Safety Act 1990. Local authorities are required to have regard to it, but the Agency is empowered by the legislation to seek Ministerial direction to make local authorities comply with it. Given this power, after much discussion, officers and lead members felt that at least moving some way towards the Agency's requirements would be sensible. We would not accept that the approach taken by the service has created issues and there is no evidence of any significant problems arising from the approaches taken. Officers also hope that the Agency will engage fully with WRS when it comes to revising the Food Hygiene code as officers feel there is much that the service could contribute in terms of our experience of working through intelligence.

The Agency identified several areas, but the main area impacted is how the service addresses lower risk premises, those coded category D and E for the purposes of the Code. This represents over 4,000 of our approximately 5,800 registered food businesses across the county. The detailed business case indicates that, in 2009/10 there were 5123 food registrations across the six districts compared with the current 5791, representing an increase of 13%. Many of these have been in the lower risk categories.

Currently the service uses a range of intervention forms to address these including inspection for those of the highest risk. Adhering to the letter of the Code requires an intervention every 2-years to category D premises, which the Agency will allow to alternate between inspection and allowable alternative intervention. The latter are required to be deployed with category E premises every 3 years. The proposed resourcing uplift will allow the service to achieve this, and to better address new registrations, which tend to be a mix of changes in ownership of existing food premises, often with wholly new operations or food offers, and some totally new registrations, many of which in recent years have been domestic operators or owners of mobile outlets who may then work outside of Worcestershire. Again, the current WRS approach is to risk assess these premises and visit those that are, on the face of it, likely to fall into the higher risk categories. Others are contacted and spoken to without this formal intervention. The additional resource will allow more physical interventions at new registrant premises.

Two further issues were raised by the Agency, one of which related to caring premises: everything from day nurseries to residential care and nursing homes. The premises in this group that meet the criterion of having 20 persons attending or resident are subject to an additional risk score in the Code, which means they will score as category B and should be visited annually, in line with our other B-rated premises. The others, that do not trigger the additional risk factor in this group, have been assessed as other food businesses and many have been given a D rating. Most of these are good performers, scoring 4 and 5 stars routinely on the Food Hygiene rating scheme, so producing safe food and this had led to their reduced risk rating. The Agency is, however, concerned that this does not address their inherent risk and wants them to revert to category B. Officers have sought a compromise position on this point as they feel our approach to risk has been reasonable in this case and



Agenda Item 5

have asked to see the risk assessment used by the Agency to reach this conclusion. Rather than bluntly resisting, officers have offered to address those businesses that provide “full meals” as part of their service, which might be perceived to offer a greater risk than, for example, a day nursery that simply provides snacks or toast and jam to the children attending. Again, this work can be accommodated within the resource uplift and by re-purposing some current vacant capacity (where officers have reduced hours,) to be dedicated to food law activities.

The final aspect is the timeliness of interventions at category A, B and C rated premises. The letter of the Code requires these to be visited within 2 weeks either side of the due date, so a 4-week window. Our fully qualified Environmental Health Officer resource is used flexibly to address all aspects undertaken by the Community Environmental Health division. This means that the service aims to intervene with these premises in the financial year they are due, but not necessarily in the window specified. Whilst there are some premises that do fall into Category A (potentially hospitals and hospices,) that have to be visited every 6-months, many are usually poorly performing premises that would otherwise be rated B (annual visit,) C (18month visit interval,) or D (2-yearly visit.) With these premises, the approach taken is to work with them to bring them back to normal compliance rather than labelling them as category A and visiting them in 6-months. This is not a requirement of the Code, but officers feel this is the right approach to take for the sake of the businesses and their customers. To achieve Code compliance would require the service to create dedicated Environmental Health Officer capacity within a food or EH Commercial team, and this would require additional resource as we could not continue to deploy the existing resource flexibly to address all forms of demand. On that basis, in the absence of evidence that the approach creates significant additional risk, especially as we address poor performing businesses in the way we do, the partnership will continue to operate this aspect in the current way. It is hoped that the increase in resource and the re-purposed current resource will mean that a proportion of visits can be timelier.

Staffing changes and costs

Given that the increase in resourcing is mainly necessary to tackle our lower risk outlets, officers have suggested focusing recruitment on both specialist Senior Technical Officers, who can visit all premises, and Regulatory Support Officers, with the latter able to be trained to discharge interventions at category E premises and work with well performing category Ds. The intention is to recruit 3 Regulatory Support Officers and 2 Senior Technical Officers. The cost of this additional capacity, broken down following the normal partner contributions is outlined in the appendix, along with an indication of how this will impact the overall spend for each partner. The Community Environmental Health Manager will also use a number of hours that have been released by several officers going part-time, to create a further Senior Technical Officer post at no additional cost to partners. This will be added to this capacity, so creating a team of 6FTE dedicated to addressing mainly lower risk and new registered premises but also with some capacity to deal with some higher risk premises. This increase will necessitate changes to how the three Principal Officers within Community Environmental Health address the wider workload, but this can be achieved without compromising our approaches in other technical areas.



Agenda Item 5

The resource increase has been agreed by the partners and has been built into medium term financial plans in the recent budget-setting process, so the service can begin to move forward with this from April 2024. Whilst officers appreciate the current financial situation for the sector, these duties do fall within statute and since there are powers to compel compliance, it seemed sensible to at least move toward what is required.

On 14th February, the Agency confirmed in a letter to Chief Executives that it would de-escalate its engagement with the WRS partners and move back to the normal level of engagement between its officers and our Food Lead. The letter indicates they would still like to see further changes to our approach but, at this stage they will simply monitor our performance. Members are therefore asked to note the report and formally approve the increase in establishment that is described in the report. The service will however continue to lobby for the intelligence-led approach to take a greater role in all forms of regulatory activity in the future as the service has demonstrated how this can succeed.

Contact Point

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Head of Regulatory Services
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Tel: 01562 738088

Appendix: Cost and impact on Partner Contributions

| Council | 2024-25 agreed %'s | Total Partner Contribution 24- 25 - including Technical Officers | Budget for Additional Food Employees | Total Partner Budget 2024-25 |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|
| | % | £ | £ | £ |
| Bromsgrove District Council | 14.45% | 760,755 | 33,855 | 794,610 |
| Malvern Hills District Council | 13.13% | 521,190 | 30,762 | 551,952 |
| Redditch Borough Council | 17.68% | 685,334 | 41,423 | 726,757 |
| Worcester City Council | 16.07% | 658,493 | 37,650 | 696,143 |
| Wychavon District Council | 23.43% | 917,177 | 54,894 | 972,071 |
| Wyre Forest District Council | 15.24% | 594,280 | 35,706 | 629,986 |
| Total | 100.00% | 4,137,229 | 234,290 | 4,371,519 |

The following sums will be added to the base budget to cover the cost of the additional 5 posts. The total includes and allowance of £11,000 for car allowance, equipment, IT kit and training requirements to maintain competence.





WRS Board

Date: 29th February 2024

Worcestershire Regulatory Services Service Plan 2024/25

Recommendations

That members of the Board:

- (i) Approve the WRS service plan for 2024/5
- (ii) They specifically note the level of work to be undertaken by the service this year in relation to the partners' roles as local food authorities.

Report

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

The plan follows very much the pattern of previous years and has an Executive Summary to pick up the main points. Last year's plan was the first which had no pandemic related activity as part of it. This year's plan continues to consider the long-standing strategic priorities for local authority regulatory services provided by DBaT, as these provide a framework that allows WRS to have a golden thread back to the priorities of the six partners and to link to the requirements of the various national bodies that oversee our work.

Whilst we have retained these for this purpose, the focus of this year's plan remains on the tactical priorities identified in the service's Strategic Assessment. This piece of work reviews the full data and intelligence picture, looks at emerging threats and makes a number of recommendations as to the areas that need to be addressed. These are listed below.

- Supporting a safe and vibrant night-time economy
- Promoting the responsible sale, breeding, and ownership of dogs
- Promoting safe and clean communities
- Supporting commercial businesses to operate safely and responsibly
- Supporting industry to operate safely and responsibly

Whilst the last two are best described as business as usual for a regulatory service, the other three are cross cutting in nature and will need to be addressed by various staff within the three teams to deliver outcomes for our communities. The Strategic Assessment will be reviewed during 2024/5 so we will update members on the outcome of this during the year.

Agenda Item 6

Again, a range of high-level activities against the 5 tactical priorities are identified within the plan so that members will be aware of the general focus of the workload. Below this will sit several plans, either team based or cross cutting that will be used to drive the actual business activities.

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

Working with businesses and other partners is a key theme for both generating income to mitigate financial risk but also to ensure that outcomes are delivered that match the priorities of partners and stakeholders. Delivery for other local authorities also remains a key income generation strategy, supported by limited work for the private sector and any specific grant monies that we feel are worthwhile pursuing. We have retained most of our client-base post pandemic and we hope we will be able to identify new ones, although over time this does get harder. We do however remain hopeful that this strategy will remain fruitful.

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

As with previous years, members are asked to pay particular attention to the provisions for food hygiene delivery in the coming year. This is to meet one of the recommendations of the auditors from the Food Standards Agency who visited the service in May 2017. They were keen that members have a better understanding of the demand in this service area when they authorised the plan for this and future years.

This is particularly relevant given the information provided to members regarding our recent engagement with the Food Standards Agency and the outcome of increasing resources. We know that the capacity added has the potential to increase interventions by around 2000 per annum, however at this stage we know that the market for staff is difficult and there will be training requirements for the proposed new Regulatory Compliance Officers that will need to be met before they are able to work solo. Hence, we are unlikely to achieve this level for 2024/5, but after this the full potential should be achieved.

Members are asked to note the proposed numbers of inspections and similar activities proposed for the new financial year that will be undertaken to discharge the statutory duties of the 6 partners in relation to food control. We will keep the board updated on progress as the year goes forward.

The Risk Register has been updated to reflect the current position in areas like IT provision and development, staffing levels, and our reliance on contractual relationships for income. The threat from cyber-attack has become more real in recent years as the devastating consequences have been felt by colleagues in other local authorities elsewhere in the country. We will work closely with our ICT host, Wyre Forest DC, to limit the risk of this. Our teams have for many years been using mobile and flexible work activities which has yielded efficiencies but our reliance on ICT provision to deliver this does increase our vulnerability to disruption.

Agenda Item 6

Given the Food Standards Agency's intervention, although this potential issue has always been flagged in the Risk Register as a general risk of not meeting Government or central body expectations,, we have added a specific line for them.

Financial Implications

None

Sustainability

NA

Contact Points

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Background Papers

Service Plan 2020/21 including Risk Register



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Service Plan 2024/25

Worcestershire Regulatory Services Vision

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

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The plan broadly follows previous years, outlining how the service will operate over the following 12 months to deliver on both national and local priorities, some of which are highlighted in the plan, and indicating at a high-level what activities the service will carry out to achieve or address those priorities and how success will be measured. The Service will enter 2024/25 with a total agreed budget from the district partners of just under £4.372M, assuming partners agree the requested increase in food hygiene resourcing. This includes the necessary uplift to cover the pay increases previously agreed, the cost of increased pension contributions by the employer and increases for hosting costs reflected by the on-going inflationary pressures faced in recent years. This figure does not include the amount for Bromsgrove and Redditch to add their Enviro-crime and Planning Enforcement functions to the partnership as, at the time of writing, this has yet to be formally discharged.

Plans for 2024/25 are based on the most recent Strategic Assessment for the service, which identifies several cross-cutting priorities. These feature several areas that create the most issues for us and our partners. Addressing these via relevant control strategies will be an important modification to the way we have worked previously, allowing all relevant elements of the service to focus on problem solving and work with partners, including the Trading Standards team to address them. Uncertainty remains with world events like the war in Ukraine and the conflict in Israel/ Palestine making headlines still. With elections due in the UK and the US, and changes of incumbents a distinct possibility, policy direction both nationally and internationally remains uncertain. Government's latest settlement has provided limited respite for councils but is far from what bodies like the LGA regard as moving local authority finances onto a stable and sustainable footing. Seldom a week goes by without another local authority at least talking about the growing risk of section 114 notices. Closer to home, whilst no one has yet suggested this drastic step, we can see that several the seven councils in Worcestershire have financial issues to address either in the immediate future or in the coming years.

Although the financial uncertainty in the sector may make it more difficult, the service will continue to pursue work for other local authorities. We have already been successful with one or two new contracts and have retained work from most of our customers. Buying in capacity for work that must be done by law may begin to look more attractive for those with difficult financial positions. We saw the announcement of several county devolution deals towards the end of 2023, all of which seemed to be predicated on retaining 2-tier arrangements, so it may be that the threat we anticipated of losing business due to re-organisations may not come to fruition. Locally, we see little movement on this policy area. In making decisions regarding service delivery, the service will continue to risk assess what it does considering the economic impacts and impacts on health and well-being that arise from the issues to be addressed. Whilst risk will remain a key criterion against which we deploy resources, intelligence will be a major contributor, especially in relation to issues which cut across our teams. By gathering data and understanding issues, rather than simply rushing out to deal with problems, we will focus resources on where they deliver the best outcomes, with better long-term solutions. This was a key part of our response to the pandemic and will remain at the heart of service delivery moving forward.

Simon Wilkes
Head of Worcestershire Regulatory Services

Peter Carpenter
Interim Executive Director of Resources Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils

1. INTRODUCTION

This is the fourteenth formal annual service plan to be produced by Worcestershire Regulatory Services and follows a similar format to the previous plans with an Executive Summary and details in appendices that follow on from the main commentary. The financial information covers the three-year accounting period 2024/5, 2025/26, and 2026/27 however the operational detail reflects the planned activities that the service will undertake in 2024/25.

2023/24 was another very busy year for WRS. Post-pandemic, we have now moved back to workloads that resemble the pre-pandemic world, with the problems we would normally associate with Environmental Health work returning to the fore. In the early part of the year, we saw a spike in nuisance work as the good weather of spring moved into early summer, but the shift into a wet July and August meant that the spike in these activities was somewhat curtailed. However, there was plenty of other work to address with a number of serious accidents to investigate, several of which involved fatalities, along with addressing the needs to review and re-write Air Quality action plans and the successful bid to DEFRA for real-time Air Quality monitoring equipment and the need to identify places to install this. Licensing moved on from policy around taxis with the deployment of the national standards into local approaches to presenting alcohol and other policies for review and re-adoption.

Page 39 Work from our usual local authority customers continued, albeit at a slightly reduced level, but income continued to grow back toward pre-pandemic levels. Several of our Primary Authority relationships that had been semi-dormant during the most stringent of pandemic controls began to come to life as businesses responded to the re-opening of the economy and the service was approached by several potential new customers. We hope to build the close working relationships necessary to make a success of this facility during the coming 12 months.

More recent announcements on Devolution and Levelling-up in two-tier areas appear to focus on county footprints, but without the shift to re-organisation or the introduction of Mayors. Last year we were anticipating more deals akin to the multi-county arrangements like the East Midlands or the single county deal areas like Cornwall. We did note that a significant number of 2-tier areas did not appear to be engaging significantly with this agenda for various reasons, and it appears that appetite for the structural changes associated with the maximum devolution deals on offer is limited, so at this stage the threat we envisaged of larger unitary county EH services not needing our support seems unlikely to impact us significant in the coming year or so. Government remains clear that re-organisation from the top down is not on the cards, which also reduces this potential threat. Time will tell whether financial pressures force areas to change their minds on this position.

One thing that didn't change during the pandemic was the need to investigate breaches of the law and a number of cases were put through to council legal departments. Full details of activity will be reported in the Annual Report to be produced at the end of May 2024 and reported to the Board in June.

One threat that has emerged is the growing willingness of the Food Standards Agency to push against the reductions in capacity by local authorities and to insist on closer alignment with the Food Law enforcement Code of Practice. Many of our peers have expressed concern that, at

a time of very difficult finances for local authorities, the insistence on addressing premises where risk is low is a pressure that the sector could do without. Post-BREXIT and post-Pandemic, with the Agency now being the national body that is tasked with ensuring the food law regime operates fully so that our export partners can have confidence in UK products, a change in emphasis back to the less interventionist is unlikely. The proposed revision of the Food Hygiene Code that was intended to embed intelligence practice into activities has been postponed till 2027 and, even then, if the example of the newly revised Food Standards Code (under-which Trading Standards is expected to operate,) it seems unlikely that the Agency will wholly embrace the intelligence operating model used by the service for other activities.

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

- On-going engagement with the Food Standards Agency in relation to activities,
- The continued delivery of our programmes of work to tackle cross cutting issues,
- Seeking new, and maintaining existing, income streams to help support local delivery,
- The further development of the WRS website to better enable public interaction, and the finalisation of the automation project allowing for wider service elements like service requests to be integrated,
- Continued work with partners to scope the potential for adding functions to WRS operational roster following the pilot on planning enforcement for Bromsgrove and Redditch,
- Continuing to develop and review practical procedures to maintain resilience and the benefits from service elements such as Legal Support and the Intel Unit that provide operational support to both WRS and Trading Standards functions.

The focus on income generation will be to target areas of greatest benefit in terms of economies of scale, the required resource intensity and income reward. It is important that only those opportunities meriting our focus are pursued as the scoping and drafting of tender documents are time consuming and onerous.

For existing partners, managers will continue to identify any changes that can be made to service delivery to either improve marginal efficiency or improve service. This is particularly relevant for areas of high demand such as planning referrals and areas of significant officer resource, such as long-standing complaints or enforcement action. This will require close working relationships to support and assist partner colleagues to ensure that we are all working as effectively as possible together. We will also continue to work with colleagues from various districts to see what functions might reasonably be added to the WRS platform to improve delivery and possibly deliver some savings through economies of scale. Such changes may not cover all partners, but all of them need to agree if other partners wish to add functions to what WRS delivers on their behalf. We will also continue to engage with the County Council around its relationship with the partnership following positive feedback on Safety at Sportsgrounds work and other aspects.

The website continues to improve post-rebuild, on an updated software platform, and the completion of our automation project in the first part of 2024/5 will increase its functionality further, including the taking of on-line payments and submission of service requests.

2. STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT AND PRIORITIES

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

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

All our partners have priorities around supporting economic growth, protecting the environment, residents, neighbourhoods, and improving health and well-being in communities. While all our work meets one or more of the above aims, we know we are delivering what partners want.

Our Strategic Assessment, the key document that helps us determine priorities, is due for review during 2024/5. It looks at a broad swathe of local, regional, and national data to help identify the key issues to be tackled over a 2 or 3-year period, with an annual sense check to ensure the environment has not changed significantly. Analysis for this purpose focussed on the six functions which generated a higher level of complaints and notifications and/or a higher level of proactive activity. This led to thirty-four analytical assessments and the recommendation for five tactical priorities to be adopted by the service for the period of the assessment's validity. Nothing has emerged during the last 12-months that would indicate a need to amend these so the tactical priorities outlined below will remain in place.

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

The night-time economy is cross-cutting and was referenced within several analytical assessments. Pubs, clubs, restaurants, and takeaways were all prominent within the analysis of alcohol licensing, food safety and nuisance due to breaches of the public nuisance objective, the non-payment of annual fees, and/or poor hygiene standards and practices. Night-time economy hotspots such as Worcester City Centre were also connected to taxi licensing issues (over-ranking etc.), whilst persistent offenders were a significant factor influencing the rate of complaints in prominent neighbourhoods. In addition, PESTELO analysis has outlined a potential for an increase in offences at smaller businesses due to financial pressures, and the continued prominence of third-party platforms such as Deliveroo, Just Eat, and Uber Eats in servicing delivery of takeaway food. It is very clear that this market is changing and introducing new methods of trading, including single kitchens offering multiple brands offers, which create their own issues from a regulatory perspective.

A good example of how follow-up on this priority works, is the enforcement programme undertaken before Christmas 2023 in Bewdley Town centre. This arose from an intelligence product, a problem profile created by the Intelligence team, that looked at issues in the town, including persistent complaints about noise and other issues from licensed premises. The profile recommended actions that were executed by mixed teams from Licensing and Community Environmental Health. Whilst the service could not support this kind of activity for all partners at the same time, we hope this model will provide a good basis for addressing persistent issues in any of our town centres where it occurs.

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

The sale and ownership of dogs is also cross-cutting and was referenced within several analytical assessments. Whilst stray dogs are generally found to be in good condition, and are usually reunited with their owners, a significant proportion of dogs are not microchipped, and dogs continue to be found in need of veterinary examination or treatment. In addition, noise from barking dogs is one of the most prominent nuisances, whilst PESTELO analysis has outlined potential issues in terms of the level of post-pandemic cases and trends regarding the breeding and sale of dogs via online platforms.

- **Promoting safe and healthy communities**

Page 42 Whilst domestic nuisance activity is significantly influenced by dogs, noise from audio-visual equipment and smoke caused by the burning of domestic and garden waste were prominent nuisances. Broader work on Air Quality would also fit within this priority and the service has taken strides forward with this, reviewing strategy and action plans as well as developing real-time monitoring capacity, where the data created may help influence behaviours of both those at risk of impact from adverse air quality but also reducing overall contributions to pollutants.

- **Supporting commercial businesses to operate safely and responsibly.**

Whilst commercial activity is significantly influenced by the night-time economy and the hospitality sector, retail food outlets were prominent within the analysis of food safety. Smaller retailers, for example, are more likely to be issued with 0, 1, or 2 food hygiene rating and are also known to be potentially connected to Trading Standards offences. In addition, whilst problematic sectors are unknown, nuisances and health and safety at work offences were more prominent in non-food businesses which will include commercial businesses. This would also include the taxi trade, however, issues reported to the service are primarily the responsibility of other enforcement bodies. Furthermore, as outlined previously, financial pressures may lead to an increase in offences at smaller businesses.

- **Supporting industry to operate safely and responsibly.**

In parallel with the previous priority recommendation, nuisances and health and safety at work offences were more prominent in non-food businesses which will include manufacturers, importers, and distributors. Such businesses are also higher risk from a food perspective (although they did not feature prominently within the analysis of food safety) and tie in with other functions such as Environmental Permitting. WRS will continue to investigate complaints, provide advice, and conduct routine interventions.

The five recommended tactical priorities can be aligned to one or more of the priorities outlined by our partners in their corporate plans or strategies. Whilst the language varies, key priorities generally relate to economic growth that works for all, health and well-being, safer and stronger communities, and a maintained or improved environment.

Whilst the overall Council financial settlements for 2024/5 are slightly better than anticipated, finance colleagues across the partners tell us they will be faced with a challenging financial situation for the foreseeable future. In the past, from a WRS perspective, this was addressed through transforming how things are done and generating income. We will continue to support partners with this difficult situation but, as we have seen in 2023/4, it is difficult to find any further meaningful savings from these functions and the intervention of the Food Standards Agency and the pressure applied to increase capacity only re-enforces this. We will however encourage partners to consider what other enforcement related functions they might wish to consider operating under the WRS banner, where we might create economies of scale to assist with delivery and potentially reduce long term costs. Whilst we have not been able to include it in this plan, it is hoped that members will sign-off on the addition of both planning enforcement and elements of enviro-crime to the partner requirements for Bromsgrove and Redditch. These functions have been piloted for a period with the two councils directly funding additional capacity within WRS. If members agree, this will be the first formal extension of district functionality since the original agreement was signed in 2010. It will leave the other 4 partners with the option to port their own services onto the WRS platform should they see this as a positive and for the service to explore other options for building district enforcement functions into what is delivered. It also allows the service to build its areas of expertise to potentially sell outside of Worcestershire once we are happy with our staff levels and systems.

If the financial situation deteriorates significantly and all partners need to reduce their financial commitment, there will need to be agreement across the partners as to where reductions might fall. The service will use the following 3 key criteria to assess the risk and impacts of any proposed further reductions in service provision:

- a) Are vulnerable people impacted?
- b) Are there Health and Well Being issues involved?
- c) Is there a positive/negative impact on economic activity?

In a financially constrained environment, using intelligence to direct capacity in a way that addressed the most significant risks becomes even more relevant. There remains a risk that demand which can no longer be met by WRS is simply re-directed to partners in other ways e.g., via other forms of complaint. Historically we have felt that the likelihood of central government interventions in our areas was very limited. The Food Standards Agency's intervention changes this but no other national bodies are currently pursuing this route. It is however worth considering which other national competent bodies may follow suit if pressed to demonstrate the soundness of regimes they oversee. Suggestions have been made that DEFRA are considering a framework regime for Animal Health and Welfare, but we do not know what functions this might embrace.

3. FINANCE

A summary of the budget position for 2024/5 is shown at Appendix B, along with the proposed budgets for the following two years. A more detailed breakdown will be available to the Joint Board in its regular financial reports. Income levels are difficult to estimate but we have set ourselves income targets going forward to maintain a greater resilience than would otherwise be possible.

4. AUDIT AND SCRUTINY ARRANGEMENTS

The critical review of the Animal Licensing processes and procedures was carried out in accordance with the Worcestershire Internal Audit Shared Service Audit Plan for Bromsgrove District Council for 2023 as approved by the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee on 21st July 2022. The audit was a critical review of the Animal Licensing processes and covered the proposed processes and procedures to be implemented as part of an internal review by the licensing manager. Internal systems and documentation were scrutinised, alongside current and proposed processes. The reviewing officer was content with the proposals and the changes outlined within specified timeframes and the commitment the team would make to ensure these were implemented to create more efficiencies in the team. This work has commenced, and each process will be implemented in turn with changes checked, reviewed, and evaluated.

Where any broad and in-depth scrutiny of the service maybe required, the legal agreement requests that member Authorities consider the priority of requests from their individual Overview and Scrutiny Committees and that they should use reasonable endeavours to agree joint scrutiny arrangements with a view to avoiding duplication of effort. However, where Scrutiny Committees have expressed an interest in simply understanding more about the service's work, officers have always obliged and attended. This has led to good working relationships with several Overview and Scrutiny Committees, leading to the positive re-enforcement for what the service does in those council areas. During 2023/4, presentations were undertaken to O&S Committees in both Wychavon and Malvern Hills Districts to help members get a better understanding of the service, particularly those members new to local government.

Engaging with partners in this way and working with partners on projects like the redevelopment of town and city centres, helps to build, and maintain relationships with partner colleagues and helps to highlight the important role of regulation when looking at wider, long term policy development. Being able to support the work with Ukrainian refugees has also shown the ability of the service to be flexible with resource

deployment. In this case capacity that was originally created during the pandemic, was re-directed to support a number of the partners with this work, however, when the various funding streams come to an end, this capacity may no longer be available unless it is funded for something else.

5. ACTIVITIES & OUTCOME MEASURES

The service's IT system allows accurate reporting on activities. The service has continued to work with members to demonstrate the service's performance and the service's current core performance indicators are listed as Appendix C.

Over time, with one or two notable exceptions, we have seen improvement or maintenance of most of these indicators, which we hope will continue in 2024/25. The non-business customer satisfaction figures improved in the run up to the pandemic, but we have struggled to maintain them at the levels we would like since then. The sheer demand for nuisance and other complaint work has at times, simply outstripped capacity to address it, so customers were less happy with how long it took us to get to them and to resolve issues where we could. Whilst we have introduced some measures to improve first response times, it can still take some time for a suitably qualified officer to get to look at and assess a nuisance problem. The need to continue to deliver food interventions to meet the increasing expectations of the Food Standards Agency does risk exacerbating this, especially if they don't accept our tactical approach of severely limiting proactive food activity during times of high nuisance demand, as we are unable to switch this work off. Expectations of what can be delivered remain very high in some cases and often are beyond what the law can deliver. No one is entitled to silence all the time at their home. We will continue to try to better understand the issues customers present and look to improve performance during the coming year.

The activities outlined below are examples of what is planned by the service, structured either as addressing a cross cutting priority or as a more business-as-usual activity. We have also included corporate, and staff related activities as our staff is our most important resource. We are a people business.

We believe that activity data combined with the core performance indicators will give Members the confidence that the Service continues to perform well, given the current financial constraints, and it continues to contribute to the wider local agenda. The approach is very much in line with Government thinking in terms of reducing burdens on and supporting local businesses, whilst tackling rogues who would ignore their responsibilities and criminals who use business as a model for generating criminal assets. It also addresses the significant demand that comes into the service as complaints/ service requests, covering a wide range of issues and concerns from residents, visitors, businesses, and the other departments of partner authorities within Worcestershire.

| | OUTCOME | WHAT WE WILL DO | NATIONAL PRIORITY | MEASURES |
|---|--|--|--------------------------|---|
| 1 | Supporting a safe and vibrant night-time economy | <p>Vehicles in use by the Taxi trades are fit whilst in service.</p> <p>Ensuring that all drivers and operators granted licenses meet the fit and proper test.</p> <p>Prevent Licensed premises from causing significant alcohol-fuelled crime/ disorder and ASB</p> <p>Ensuring that nuisance and other pollution related issues occurring within the NTE are tackled</p> <p>Monthly alcohol profile to be shared with partners, reviewed and suitable work tasked</p> <p>Respond to complaints regarding alcohol and similar licensing related issues e.g. underage sales, breach of conditions, poor conduct of licence holders, etc.</p> | 1,3,4,5 | <p>% of licensed businesses subject to allegations of not upholding the 4 licensing objectives</p> <p>Vehicles requiring work or taken off the road following intervention (Number and % of the total fleet.)</p> <p>% of service requests where resolution is achieved to customers satisfaction</p> |
| 2 | Promoting the responsible sale, breeding, and ownership of dogs | <p>Provide dog owners and businesses with advice, assistance and support using a range of channels and through events.</p> <p>Conduct risk based/ intelligence-led interventions with dog owners and businesses, targeting</p> | 1, 2, 3, 4 | <p>% of service requests where resolution is achieved to business satisfaction</p> <p>% of service requests where resolution is achieved to customers satisfaction</p> <p>% of stray dogs seized in that are compliant with microchipping regulations</p> |

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | resources towards areas of high non-compliance or risk. Ensuring that dog-related nuisance and similar issues are tackled | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|

| | | | | |
|---|--|--|-------------------|---|
| 3 | Promoting safe and healthy communities | <p>Ensure that nuisance and other pollution related issues are appropriately tackled.</p> <p>Respond to complaints and take appropriate action.</p> <p>Provide relevant advice and information, available through a range of channels.</p> <p>Maintain preparedness for response to emergencies, including disease outbreaks.</p> <p>Protect the environment and the public through monitoring air quality and ensuring that contaminated land is suitable for development.</p> <p>Monitor Air quality and respond to contaminated land issues.</p> <p>Supporting the planning system</p> <p>Respond to disease notifications and outbreaks.</p> | 2, 3, 4 | <p>% of service requests where resolution is achieved to customers satisfaction.</p> <p>Delivery of the annual air quality reporting duties.</p> <p>Rate of noise complaint per 1000 head of population.</p> <p>Disease response plans maintained, reviewed and updated on a regular basis.</p> |
| 4 | Supporting commercial businesses to operate safely and responsibly. | Maintain an intelligence led response to complaints and take appropriate action, building our | 1, 2, 4, 5 | % food businesses broadly compliant at first visit/ inspection |

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| | | | | |
|--|--|---|------------------|---|
| <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 48</p> | | <p>ability to resolve issues or re-direct callers on their first contact with us.</p> <p>Support Businesses to become economically successful and compliant with the law (Pollution, H&S, Food Safety, Licensing) through risk based/ intelligence-led interventions.</p> <p>Ensure Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Drivers Licence applications are processed in a timely manner.</p> <p>Facilitate Consumers in being able to make informed choices on where to eat or purchase food through published food hygiene ratings.</p> <p>Implement and promote the FHRS and publish hygiene ratings.</p> | | <p>% of food businesses scoring 0,1,2* as at 1st April each year</p> <p>% of service requests where resolution is achieved to customers satisfaction</p> |
| <p>5</p> | <p>Supporting industry to operate safely and responsibly.</p> | <p>Maintain an intelligence led response to complaints and take appropriate action, building our ability to resolve issues or re-direct callers on their first contact with us.</p> <p>Provide businesses with advice and assistance.</p> <p>Ensure business controls of environmental emissions are in place leading to reduced environmental damage and better health.</p> | <p>1 2, 4, 5</p> | <p>% permitted businesses broadly compliant at first visit/ inspection</p> <p>% of service requests where resolution is achieved to customers satisfaction</p> |
| <p>6</p> | <p>Addressing Corporate issues</p> | <p>Respond to complaints and take appropriate action, building our</p> | <p>NR</p> | <p>% of service requests where resolution is achieved to customers satisfaction</p> |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|-----------|---|
| | | <p>ability to resolve issues or re-direct callers on their first contact with us.</p> <p>Maintain a register of compliments and complaints with actions taken.</p> <p>Maintain links with county-wide TCG & take part in partner exercises to test plans, as appropriate.</p> | | <p>% of service requests where resolution is achieved to business satisfaction</p> <p>Business Continuity plans are maintained, reviewed and updated on a regular basis</p> |
| 7 | Supporting staff to perform well | <p>Ensure necessary training is identified and delivered.</p> <p>Undertake annual staff survey.</p> <p>Undertake annual staff performance reviews with regular feedback sessions from supervisors and managers.</p> | NR | <p>Staff sickness and absence at public sector national average or better</p> <p>% of staff who enjoy working for WRS</p> |

5A: FOOD SERVICE DELIVERY

If partners agree the budget increase, the recent re-enforcement by the Food Standards Agency of the need to operate to the letter of the Food Hygiene Code of Practice will mean an increase in staffing commitment and therefore the level of outputs. Whilst it is clear that the Agency wants more direct interventions with low-risk premises, this does not mean that we must wholly abandon the intelligence model of working, particularly in determining reactive activity. We have known for some time that general hygiene complaints tend to reveal very few significant issues and that 95% of premises are broadly compliant if visited solely based on this type of complaint. So, we will continue to use intelligence thinking to shape our reactive approach, even if we cannot use it to wholly drive proactive activities. It can still also drive any proactive project work if we see themes emerging in particular food premises.

Time recording estimates indicate that 6-9 FTE are committed annually to Food Hygiene work, with an average quoted to the Agency of 8.2FTE. If partners agree to increase this by the 5FTE mentioned in the earlier paper, this will increase the volume of lower risk (category D and E premises,) and new registrations that can be subject to direct intervention, and hopefully provide some capacity to address other food premises. The levels indicated in the table below reflect this, however there will be a need to allow for recruitment time for all posts and training time for the

new Regulatory Compliance Officer capacity, so 2024/5 is unlikely to see the full benefit of what this new capacity can deliver. It may take time to recruit into some of these posts, particularly the higher competency ones as there are only limited numbers of people available who are qualified. We do hope however, that all staff will be in post by the beginning of Q2 and those who need training will be trained by the beginning of Q3. For comparison, we have also retained last year's figures (in italics) so that members can see where the expanded focus lies.

The table below is our best estimate currently of where we are in terms of visits due and what we will aim to discharge within proposed resource based on the assumption that visit levels will need to be somewhat curtailed over the summer to address significant reactive nuisance demand.

| Element of Food plan | Visits that we will aim to complete |
|---|--|
| <p><i>Estimated number of Food Hygiene visits scheduled for 2023/4 (based on the Food Hygiene rating system.)</i></p> <p>Estimated number of Food Hygiene visits scheduled for 2024/5 (based on the Food Hygiene rating system.)</p> | <p><i>1742 of which approximately 175 will be in the higher risk categories and the remainder in categories C and D</i></p> <p>The FSA have now directed through our engagement that they consider Categories A-C and the majority of D rated premises to require a site visit.</p> <p>Hence 1167 across all categories A-D of which approximately 110 will be in the highest A-B risk categories with 415 Cs and 633 Ds.</p> <p>Category Es may continue to follow an alternative enforcement approach subject to Food Lead assessment. This comprises 569 E rated premises.</p> |
| <p><i>Estimated number of premises scheduled for alternative approaches to inspection during 2023/24</i></p> <p>Estimated number of premises scheduled for alternative approaches to inspection during 2024/25</p> | <p><i>500</i></p> <p>181 E rated premises</p> |

| | |
|---|---|
| <p><i>Estimated number of new registrations/ unrated premises that will require inspection during 2023/24</i></p> <p>Estimated number of new registrations/ unrated premises that will require inspection during 2024/25</p> | <p><i>800, of which about one-third will be low risk and can be dealt with initially by questionnaires</i></p> <p>800, of which about one-third will be low risk and can be dealt with initially by questionnaires</p> |
| <p><i>Estimated number of overdue premises assessed as requiring a visit during 2023/24</i></p> <p>Estimated number of overdue premises assessed as requiring a visit during 2024/25</p> | <p><i>350 from previous years plus those previously identified on the system that would otherwise have been picked up during 2022/23</i></p> <p>1512 from previous years (Apr 22-Mar 24) including the period for which inspections were suspended due to Covid restrictions.</p> <p>790 other premises remain outstanding from pre-2021. The vast majority of these are very low risk premises together with anomalies that remain from legacy data systems and require data cleansing. These will all require an audit check to establish their status.</p> |

These figures should give members a reasonable picture of the volume of pro-active food hygiene related activity that should take place during 2024/25.

6. PERFORMANCE REPORTING

Performance against outcomes will be reported to the WRS Board, quarterly, six-monthly, or annually, depending on the individual measure. The IT platform enables the collection and analysis of data which is both accurate and robust and recent improvements in data extraction have increased the frequency with which several measures can be reported. The service's ability to provide activity data has continued to improve as the benefits of the IT platform have been implemented. Use of time recording to give a better understanding of how much it costs to undertake specific activities is continuing to be refined. Members participated in a session in October 2019 with officers, part of which was to consider the suite of current measures and it was agreed that no changes were required currently. These are listed as appendix C.

7. STRUCTURE

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

- 1) The Community Environmental Health team provides Food Hygiene, Health and Safety at Work, Public Health and Nuisance functions using three teams. Currently, three teams operate on a geographical split covering Redditch/ Bromsgrove, Wychavon/Malvern Hills, Worcester City/ Wyre Forest. The teams rotate around the three geographical areas on a quarterly basis so officers experience and become familiar with the whole county. The geographical teams are organised to reflect the balance of demand across the County. This may change slightly should the new Food resource be approved, and Board can be updated on how this will operate once in place. The legal support role also sits in this team as most of the casework emanates from here.
- 2) The Technical Services team provides all environmental health support around planning matters, delivers IPPC inspection, Air Quality and Contaminated Land Regime work, manages the pest control contracts, and directly delivers the Dog Wardens service. The internal IT support and system management roles, due to the complex technical nature of the work and the in-house first-contact team of Duty Officers also sit within this team. The team also delivers the majority of the income generation work for other local authorities as well as the Planning Enforcement and Homes for Ukraine work for two of our partner authorities.
- 3) The Licensing and Support Services unit delivers all WRS licensing administration and licensing enforcement, along with the wider in-house clerical/ administrative support that is required.

The arrangement of 3 Team Managers and the Head of Service has successfully provided the necessary management cover and support in recent years, as well as promoting income generation in many areas of the service, although the pandemic stretched this to breaking point.

The Trading Standards element has been retained in the structure chart as, since October 2016, the Community EH Manager and the Head of Regulatory Services have been providing management support to the Trading Standards team. This will continue into 2024/25 with the County Council being happy with the arrangement and the funding situation meaning it is unlikely that further resource can be made available soon. The support of management across the Trading Standard functions by WRS provides additional benefits with cross team working and knowledge, especially in areas of income generation and business support, to the benefit of both WRS partners and the County Council. This led to the Technical Services unit delivering the County Council's statutory role on Petroleum Licensing alongside the district councils' permitting function for vapour recovery at sites. This means businesses have a single point of contact for both.

The County Council asked the service to deliver the Safety at Sports Ground function several years ago and this has now moved onto a rolling contract rather than a time limited one, so WRS will continue to discharge this until either the County Council decides to take it back or the districts chose to end this relationship. The move of new enforcement functions from Bromsgrove and Redditch onto the structure chart has yet to be agreed, so it is not included here but members will be made aware of how this will work within the Technical Services unit in due course.

8. TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Changes to the legal framework occur reasonably frequently and the increased income generation work requires highly competent individuals. To maintain the competence of its staff, meet contractual obligations and ensure that the partner's statutory duties are correctly discharged, the service must maintain a training budget for its staff. Over the life of WRS this has been massively reduced reflecting the financial realities that the service faces, and the service uses various approaches to ensure the money is spent wisely. Developing staff to ensure there are opportunities to plan succession is also essential.

In recent years, there has been a focus on enabling staff to work across the Environmental Health professional areas. Few officers only remain competent for one of their professional disciplines. This paid dividends in the pandemic response as it allowed us to move people into either directly servicing the pandemic response or to backfill that capacity in high demand areas like nuisance. Whilst the Food Standards Agency's push for more food interventions does undermine this to some extent, the service will look to retain this principle with its fully qualified Environmental Health Officers. In Technical Services, where traditional Environmental Health backgrounds are less helpful, officers have been recruited with a range of backgrounds to deliver more specialised activities characterised by the functions in this division of the service.

Within Licensing, the pandemic gave the opportunity to review administrative processes and reduce the burden of several paper systems. Automating application processes and payment will further support this. This has allowed officers to look proactively at enforcement across the districts and the service hopes to give this greater focus in the next 12 months. There are some disciplines within licensing that our competent qualified technical officers require training within such as caravan licensing and animal health and this will help to ensure that no officer only has experience of just a single local licensing regime.

In pursuit of this, a competency framework for Technical Officers was developed and it will continue to be used with the aim of identifying training needs and developing the competency of officers more widely. Broader competencies will allow a wider range of people to deliver technical work and enable the service to tender for such contracts outside of the existing Partnership arrangements.

The size of the officer cohort in the service makes buying in trainers to deliver technical training to our teams economically viable for the service. A lot of aspects of professional practice and process are common across the enforcement professions so we can continue to offer this as an

option to colleagues within Trading Standards and some of our neighbours where we have spaces available on the courses that we arrange. On-line and virtual training is now offered on several platforms, helping to manage costs, and allowing officers to maintain competence.

9. BUSINESS CONTINUITY

There is no doubt that the Covid 19 pandemic tested the business continuity plans of the service and it rose to the challenges. The decision by the six districts to have a single, Environmental Health service paid dividends in terms of the service's ability to balance pandemic controls with business-as-usual activities. It is doubtful that six separate services, subject to similar levels of financial reduction over the past 10 years could have responded as well as the shared service.

Business continuity plans for the service were developed and have been shared with the relevant Emergency Planning teams in the partner authorities. If the impact of the on-going financial constraints is that partners require reductions that are not currently envisaged, this will threaten our ability to maintain the full range of interventions across these functions whilst responding to large scale events and delivering contractual obligations. Priorities have therefore been established as part of the Business Continuity Planning process so the service is clear what will stop and what will continue in event of an emergency and how the service would respond to incidents such as the potential destruction of our office base or at least it temporarily being out of action. Additional consideration is required where reductions are suggested to ensure the impact on income generation is understood and this item is included in the current Risk Register.

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Cyber security is the major consideration currently with a number of high-profile attacks on local authorities that have caused chaos for the delivery of services and have resulted in the complete loss of a lot of data. We are working closely with Wyre Forest's IT team to ensure we limit the threat and are giving wider thought to contingency measures. Recent incidents suggest that temporarily we may need to return to full paper recording for a period before digital resource can be restored! Recently the Technical Service Unit ran a short exercise to test the staff, particularly our supervisor cohort's response in a cyber incident. This helped highlight several gaps in information held in emergency documents and was helpful in getting officers to think the unthinkable. This kind of exercise, if undertaken regularly will improve the response should a genuine emergency occur, so the other WRS units will undertake a similar exercise. Given the prevalence of cyber-attacks, testing plans cannot be seen as a luxury anymore, it must become a necessity.

Despite Trading Standards returning to direct County Council control, the Community Environmental Health team and the Trading Standards and Animal Health unit will continue to work closely together to ensure that, in event of an emergency or capacity shortage, officers can support each other when necessary. Having the teams managed by the same Manager on a day-to-day basis, together under one roof and in one office space will continue to allow both teams to utilise pairs of hands, extra eyes and ears and boots on the ground, to tackle any incident or alteration to work demands that may require additional resource or a different workforce allocation. In event of a significant issue like an animal disease outbreak,

the County Council has previously agreed that any support required from WRS staff will be paid for. The Trading Standards team has also engaged significantly more with Licensing as it has developed its work on illicit tobacco as a number of these premises are licensed.

10. PARTNERSHIPS

The service continues to need to work closely with a range of partners to deliver what is required against several agendas. The importance of the six local authority partners is recognised, and WRS will continue to maintain our existing engagement with other district services.

With the County Council having taken back direct control of Trading Standards functions, it has been essential to retain the strong links between both groups of staff. This is facilitated by the current co-location of teams, with Trading Standards and Animal Health continuing to occupy a section at Wyre Forest House for the foreseeable future. This is particularly relevant for the Intelligence posts that are split between the two organisations. Now that Trading Standards is part of the Public Health Directorate, it also allows WRS managers the opportunity to build relationships with the Director of Public Health and her consultants, which can assist in a range of activities and has been particularly relevant in Air Quality developments in the past 12-months.

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With Government deciding to move the functions of LEPs into higher tier local authorities, it will be more important than ever to maintain links with Economic Development colleagues at both County and District level to ensure that we are providing relevant support to business and to participate in and projects where regulatory involvement may be required.

Customer demand will have a significant impact on the nature of our interactions with partners as we move the service forward. Close partnership working with a range of professional and community groups is essential to ensure deliver of the outcomes required by partners. Key partners for engagement include:

- West Mercia Police & West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner
- The Environment Agency
- The Health and Safety Executive
- UKHSA
- Local Partnership bodies e.g., Community Safety Partnerships, Safer Communities Board, Health and Well-being Board
- Adult and Children Safeguarding Boards
- Hereford & Worcester Fire & Rescue Service
- County Council Public Health team

- Regional Regulatory Partnerships and National Bodies (ACEHO Group, CECEHO Group, CIEH, OPSS/ PARG, MJAC, NCLOG, CEnTSA, CTSI, ACTSO, NTSB).

Existing links to these bodies will be maintained. Additionally, to ensure WRS provides an attractive product for external clients, engagement with equivalent partners in other geographical regions will be pursued, which will include the collation/interpretation and review of intelligence data in such areas.

Locally, the service has made a good commitment to engaging with the agenda around organised crime. Serious Organised Crime groups are a key target for policing at regional and national level. Business activities are a good way of providing a vehicle for the laundering of money as are property purchases in general. Modern day slavery and other forms of exploitation are now part of what officers are asked to keep an eye out for when visiting businesses. This goes well beyond what Trading Standards colleagues have traditionally dealt with in doorstep crime and scams and builds on the work of licensing colleagues in relation to addressing CSE. The service has seats at both tactical and operational multiagency groups that address organised crime.

11. CONSULTATION & ENGAGEMENT

Page 56 We will usually address national consultation on legislative change through the relevant professional channels unless there is a particular reason why a specific district councils' response from the partners may be appropriate. We will continue to engage local members in relation to local policy issues, especially around licensing matters. For general engagement with the wider community of elected members, we will go back to providing several Member Newsletters per year covering the various activities that the service undertakes across the County. We will try to make this information specific to districts where it is relevant, to reassure members that our activities are seeking to protect everyone and support businesses across the whole of Worcestershire. It is hoped that the Activity Data reports that will continue to be provided to the WRS Board will provide elected members on the Board with sufficient information to also feedback to the wider membership in their respective authorities.

In terms of business engagement, with the functions of the LEP moving into Worcestershire County Council, we will continue to work with colleagues within Economic Development at district and county level on engaging with our business customers to improve our ability to address their needs. The approach outlined in our business charter will continue to inform our interactions with the business community.

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

Helping people to help themselves is at the heart of model of public service engagement we are pursuing, and it is essential we move people down this route and reduce the expectation that we will always do it for them. This idea is now developing further with all partners signing up to the “digital first” concept that, where possible, initial contact with partners will always be via a digital channel rather than necessarily requiring either telephony or face-to-face interactions. The WRS website will be maintained so that it is suitably accessible from the various digital devices used to access services on-line. The new system for on-line applications and making service requests/ complaints on-line that are directly entered into our back-office system will also improve efficiency in this area.

12. RISK & GOVERNANCE

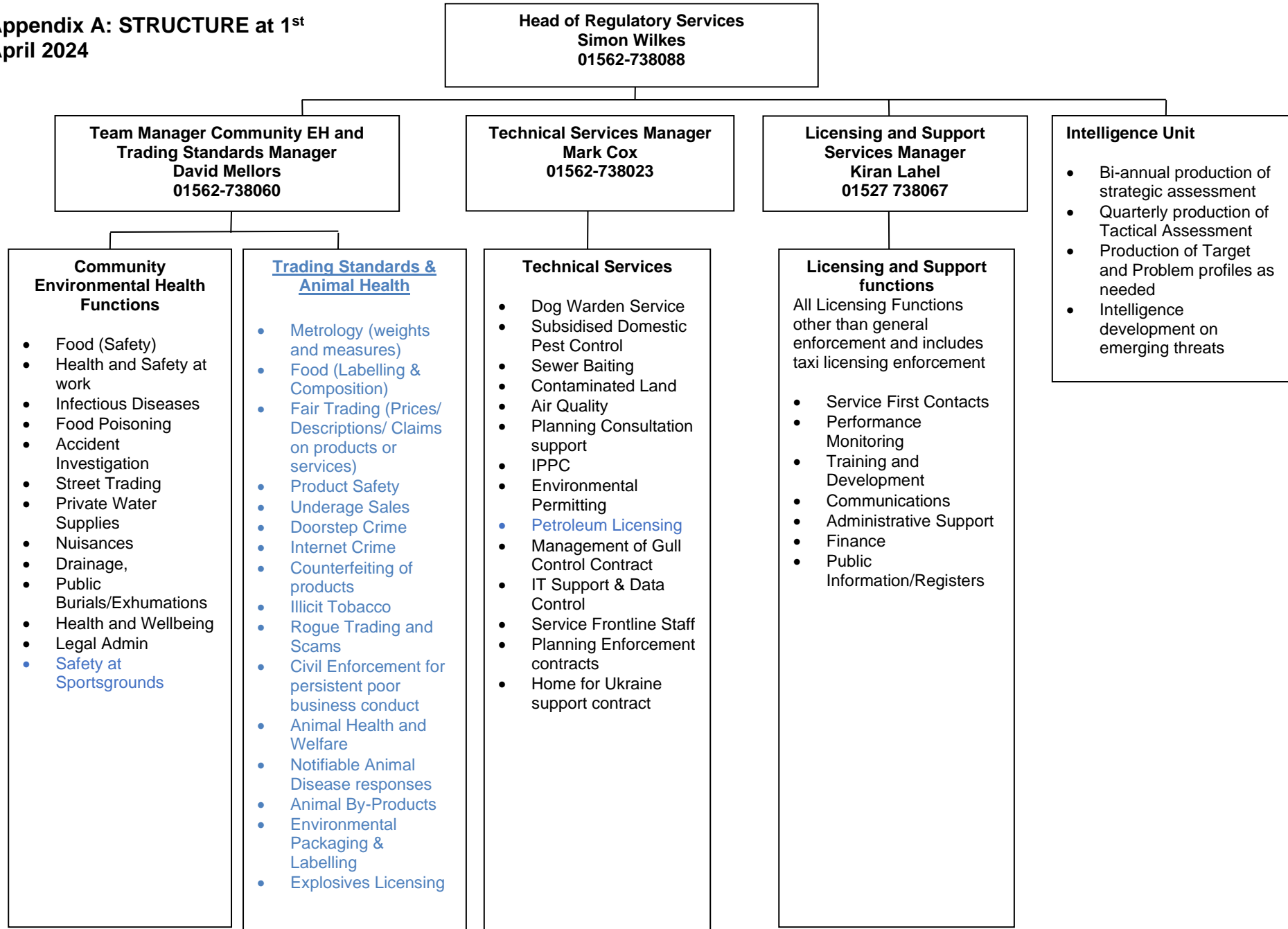
The current governance arrangements came into force on 1st April 2016 following the departure of the County Council from the formal partnership. The original legal agreement indicated that partners would pursue the shared services model for a period of at least 10 years. The 2016 agreement re-iterated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

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A copy of the current Risk Register is appended at Appendix D and has been reviewed and updated for this plan. A line has been added to address the Food Standards Agency’s recent intervention, although there has always been a clear indication of the possibility of central government bodies commenting since at least 2014 and specific reference to the potential for FSA intervention since 2016. It is fair to say that the increased forcefulness of the Agency’s position in relation to the code was not anticipated, but it is now noted, along with the risk of other central competent bodies creating codes or performance frameworks against which local authority activity may be judged.

The number of commercial contracts and obligations increasing creates some risk, particularly where sub-contractors or skilled technical staff are involved. This revised document recognises the wider geographical area that the service now covers and level of technical expertise that must be maintained. The good news is that the pandemic has confirmed our preparedness for a number of the eventualities identified and we have been able to continue to function well in most work areas throughout.

**Appendix A: STRUCTURE at 1st
April 2024**



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

| Account description | Budget | Budget | Budget |
|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | 2024 / 2025 | 2025 / 2026 | 2026 / 2027 |
| | £000's | £000's | £000's |
| Employees | | | |
| Monthly salaries | 3,667 | 3,765 | 3,857 |
| Training for professional qualifications | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Medical fees (employees') | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Employers' liability insurance | 21 | 21 | 21 |
| Employees' professional subscriptions | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Sub-Total - Employees | 3,690 | 3,788 | 3,880 |
| Premises | | | |
| Rents | 77 | 80 | 83 |
| Room hire | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Trade Waste | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Sub-Total - Premises | 77 | 80 | 83 |
| Transport | | | |
| Vehicle repairs/maint'ce | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Diesel fuel | 8 | 8 | 8 |
| Licences | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Contract hire of vehicles | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Vehicle insurances | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| Van Lease | 9 | 9 | 9 |
| Fares & Car Parking | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| Car allowances | 50 | 50 | 50 |
| Sub-Total - Transport | 84 | 84 | 84 |
| Supplies & Service | | | |

| | | | |
|---|------------|------------|------------|
| Equipment - purchase/maintenance/rental | 29 | 29 | 29 |
| Materials | 9 | 9 | 9 |
| Clothing, uniforms & laundry | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Training fees | 23 | 23 | 23 |
| General insurances | 16 | 16 | 16 |
| Printing and stationery | 17 | 17 | 17 |
| Books and publications | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Postage/packaging | 11 | 11 | 11 |
| ICT | 67 | 67 | 67 |
| Telephones | 37 | 37 | 37 |
| Taxi Tests | 14 | 14 | 14 |
| CRB Checks (taxi) | 26 | 26 | 26 |
| Support service recharges | 126 | 130 | 134 |
| Support service recharges - ICT | 74 | 77 | 80 |
| Sub-Total - Supplies & Service | 452 | 459 | 466 |

Contractors

| | | | |
|---|------------|------------|------------|
| Consultants / Contractors' fees/charges/SLA's | 246 | 241 | 241 |
| Advertising (general) | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| Grants and subscriptions | 13 | 13 | 13 |
| Sub-Total - Contractors | 264 | 259 | 259 |

Total Expenditure Budget

| | | |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| 4,567 | 4,670 | 4,772 |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|

Income

| | | | |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Grants / Primary Authority / Food Training / Contaminated Land / Stray Dogs / Ad Hoc | -407 | -407 | -407 |
| Funding from Bromsgrove & Redditch for Enforcement Work | -195 | -201 | -208 |
| Sub-Total - Income | -602 | -608 | -615 |

Income

| | | | |
|---|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| Funding from partners for Technical Officers | -117 | -115 | -117 |
| Funding from partners for Increase in Rent | -5 | -8 | -11 |
| Funding from partners for Increase in ICT | -4 | -7 | -11 |
| Funding from partners for Increase in Hosting Charges | -5 | -9 | -13 |
| Funding from partners due to unavoidable salary pressures 23-24 | -115 | -115 | -115 |
| Funding from partners due to unavoidable salary pressures 24-25 | -113 | -113 | -113 |
| Funding from partners due to unavoidable salary pressures 25-26 | | -88 | -88 |
| Funding from partners due to unavoidable salary pressures 26-27 | | | -82 |
| Sub-Total - Income | -359 | -455 | -550 |
| Additional Income | | | |
| Agreed reduced charge to Worcester City Council | -30 | -30 | -30 |
| Sub-Total - Income | -30 | -30 | -30 |
| Total Income Budget | -991 | -1,093 | -1,195 |
| | 3,576 | 3,577 | 3,577 |

DISTRICT PARTNERSHIP BUDGET

| 24-25 Partner Percentages | %'s |
|--------------------------------|----------------|
| Bromsgrove District Council | 14.45% |
| Malvern Hills District Council | 13.13% |
| Redditch Borough Council | 17.68% |
| Worcester City Council | 16.07% |
| Wychavon District Council | 23.43% |
| Wyre Forest District Council | 15.24% |
| Total | 100.00% |

Additional costs for posts for new or additional activities will be allocated using this formula unless the work is requested by either one partner or a group of partners, in which case the relevant partners will agree a formula for cost allocation.

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

| | Budget | Change in Taxi Test Policy | Agreed reduced charge to Worcs City | Contribution Technical Officers | Contribution Increase in Rent, ICT & Hosting Charges | Unavoidable Salary Pressures | Total Partner Contribution |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|--|--|---|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| | 2024 / 2025 | 2024 / 2025 | 2024 / 2025 | 2024 / 2025 | 2024 / 2025 | 23-24 & 24-25 | 2024 / 2025 |
| Budget 2024 / 25 | £000's | £000's | £000's | £000's | £000's | £000's | £000's |
| Bromsgrove District Council | 526 | -8 | | 208 | 2 | 33 | 761 |
| Malvern Hills District Council | 471 | | | 19 | 2 | 30 | 522 |
| Redditch Borough Council | 633 | | | 9 | 2 | 40 | 685 |
| Worcester City Council | 605 | | -30 | 44 | 2 | 37 | 658 |
| Wychavon District Council | 840 | | | 21 | 3 | 54 | 918 |
| Wyre Forest District Council | 546 | | | 11 | 2 | 35 | 594 |
| Total | 3,621 | -8 | -30 | 312 | 14 | 229 | 4,138 |
| | | | | | | | |
| | Budget | Change in Taxi Test Policy | Agreed reduced charge to | Contribution Technical Officers | Contribution Increase in Rent, ICT & | Unavoidable Salary Pressures | Total Partner Contribution |

| | | | Worcs City | | Hosting Charges | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------------|---|--|--|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | 2025 / 2026 | 2025 / 2026 | 2025 / 2026 | 2025 / 2026 | 24-25 & 25- 26 | 23-24, 24-25 & 25-26 | Total Partner Contribution |
| Budget 2025 / 26 | £000's | £000's | £000's | £000's | £000's | £000's | £000's |
| Bromsgrove District Council | 526 | -8 | | 215 | 3 | 46 | 782 |
| Malvern Hills District Council | 471 | | | 19 | 3 | 42 | 535 |
| Redditch Borough Council | 633 | | | 9 | 4 | 56 | 703 |
| Worcester City Council | 605 | | -30 | 40 | 4 | 51 | 670 |
| Wychavon District Council | 840 | | | 21 | 6 | 74 | 941 |
| Wyre Forest District Council | 546 | | | 12 | 4 | 48 | 610 |
| Total | 3,621 | -8 | -30 | 316 | 24 | 317 | 4,240 |
| | | | | | | | |
| | Budget | Change in Taxi Test Policy | Agreed reduced charge to Worcs City | Contributio n Technical Officers | Contribution Increase in Rent, ICT & Hosting Charges | Unavoidable Salary Pressures | Total Partner Contribution |

| | 2026 / 2027 | 2026 / 2027 | 2026 / 2027 | 2026 / 2027 | 24-25, 25-26 & 26-27 | 23-24, 24-25, 25-26 & 26-27 | Total Partner Contribution |
|--------------------------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Budget 2026 / 27 | £000's | £000's | £000's | £000's | £000's | £000's | £000's |
| Bromsgrove District Council | 526 | -8 | | 222 | 5 | 58 | 803 |
| Malvern Hills District Council | 471 | | | 20 | 4 | 52 | 548 |
| Redditch Borough Council | 633 | | | 10 | 6 | 71 | 719 |
| Worcester City Council | 605 | | -30 | 40 | 6 | 64 | 685 |
| Wychavon District Council | 840 | | | 22 | 8 | 93 | 963 |
| Wyre Forest District Council | 546 | | | 12 | 5 | 61 | 624 |
| Total | 3,621 | -8 | -30 | 326 | 34 | 399 | 4,342 |

Appendix C: Performance Measures Relating to Outcomes

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

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

Appendix D: Risk Register 2024/5

| Risk Description | Consequences | When is this likely to happen | Current Position | | | Control measures |
|---|--|-------------------------------|------------------|--------|-------------------|---|
| | | | Likelihood | Impact | Matrix RAG Status | |
| Loss of Data through IT failures or Cyber Incident | Disruption to Service Provision. Inability to produce records and data. | On-going | Low | High | Amber | Cyber-attacks are a growing threat. Wyre Forest ICT has effective processes and business continuity plans in place. WFDC upgraded relevant systems including Windows. The service moved to Office 365 during 2021/22, which provides better access to a range of provisions including Microsoft Teams and Power BI. Cyber security training is delivered regularly and risks identified are tackled. |
| Issues with the WRS database system | Impact on work planning. Self-help may not enable savings required | On-going | Low | High | Amber | New contract in place. The system provides the necessary functionality and will allow the enablement of data transfer from electronic forms which is currently in development. Complexities might arise with potential new service areas not currently catered for within the database or where existing partner databases have to be maintained in addition. |
| Effective and efficient Business Continuity arrangements in place | Disruption to service if e.g., Major Power failures or other reasons that access to Wyre Forest House is not possible. | On-going | Very Low | Medium | Amber/ Red | The pandemic has shown that we were well prepared for the need to maximise working from home and now all staff, including some previously regarded as office based can do this. Touchdown stations remain available in partner council locations. WRS Managers do need to redraft contingency plans in the event of a prolonged IT failure or cyber-attack that will allow services to be maintained. This is the greatest risk facing local authorities currently and is one we all need to move forward with. |
| Maintain our capacity to achieve service delivery | Disruption to service e.g., Major staff sickness (e.g., flu pandemic) or Unable to recruit or retain suitably qualified staff. | On-going | Low | Medium | Amber | The pandemic response has shown that the service was well-placed to respond to what was required. Consultants are available to provide short term cover and, whilst this worked well in peacetime to cover peak demand periods, the pandemic has revealed the |

| | | | | | | |
|--|---|----------|-----|------|--------------|--|
| | | | | | | <p>limits to this type of capacity. These pressures will only be resolved in the longer term by local and central government investing in additional capacity and additional training to bring more people into the regulatory professions.</p> <p>Having taken on contracts with additional authorities the demand has increased, and neighbouring authorities have lost the ability to assist with some technical specialisms. This is the double-edged sword of effectively operating as a centre of excellence. Whilst we have good resource of our own, in event of an issue, there are limits to who we can ask for help but it does mean that we are better resourced and qualified than would be possible if we didn't provide such services for income.</p> <p>Regional and sub-regional groups are in place so can provide shared resources for local authorities if required.</p> <p>Effective training and development processes are in place to ensure recruitment and retention of staff. There is increased training budget pressure, reduced technical knowledge in neighbouring authorities and increased importance in maintaining heightened skills for contractual obligations and commercial edge.</p> <p>Regular inventory and maintenance of equipment is undertaken. In the future, budget for replace may be an issue but would be a relatively small amount for partners to share.</p> |
| Pest contractors cease operations. | Disruption to service. Negative media coverage. Increased public health risks | On-going | Low | High | Green | The Pest control framework contract has multiple pest control suppliers so the loss of one allows work to be moved to the others. This should limit or eliminate risk, although the unlikely loss of multiple companies might create capacity issues. |
| Effective and efficient contract arrangement for dog control | Disruption to service if no kennels available. Negative media coverage. | On-going | Low | High | Amber | There have been significant increases in numbers of stray dogs, dog disease, breed and behavioural complexities and supplier contracts are restricted by |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|----------|--------|--------|--------------|--|---|
| | Increased public health risks | | | | | | distance. Retendering for conventional contracts in kennelling and support services remains difficult and consideration may be given to creating our own capacity. Contractual obligations provide additional pressure. The current kennelling contracts are to be extended until April 2025. |
| Hosting support does not deliver necessary financial and HR support to ensure efficient management | Efficiency of management reduced; staffing issues remain unaddressed, and performance suffers | On-going | Low | High | Amber | | Issues with the new BDC finance system have mainly been resolved, however some workarounds remain in place due to some unforeseen issues. We need to improve communication with our hosts to ensure the needs of the shared service do not get missed during any significant changes to systems or processes. |
| One or more partners continue to be under great financial pressure and may consider alternatives to the partnership to deliver their service | Creates reputational issues for remaining partners and increases the need to manage overheads. Difficulties in delivering highly varied levels of service | On-going | Medium | High | Amber | | New legal agreement limits variations in contribution before partners must move to contractual relationship but this is quite high before it kicks in (20%.) Leanness of organisation minimises overheads and focuses resource at the front line. Growth strategy should generate income to support partners in the future but there are limits to this without additional capacity being added to the system. Invest to save capacity has been committed by partners to see if this achieves the necessary outcomes but even this is now fully occupied. |
| Robust arrangements in place in relation to obtaining legal advice and monitoring legislative changes. | Loss of cases is costly and damages reputation. | On-going | Low | Medium | Green | | Continued close working with BDC legal team and other partners who don't use BDC for advocacy. Technical and legal training days for staff. Difficulty in keeping informed of Case Law developments. Membership and attendance of Officer Technical Groups outside the County does assist. |
| Service provision complies with Government requirements, New performance regimes are introduced that the service is not staffed to address | Intervention by Government bodies Other national bodies seek to introduce similar frameworks to the FSA Code to get what they regard | On-going | Low | High | Amber | | Limited detail of what is required for statutory minima can make decision making difficult around what is required in law as a minimum. The LGA is clearly aware of impact of budget reductions on regulation and has made it clear |

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|----------|------|------|-------------------|--|
| | <p>as suitable minimum levels of service.</p> <p>We understand that Government is asking its central competent bodies to ensure that regulatory regimes are fit for purpose and do not pose a risk to UK exports post BREXIT as the UK no longer has the cover of the EU taking on this role. This may make new codes or performance frameworks in areas outside of food law more likely.</p> <p>NB: Food Standards Agency is addressed below.</p> | | | | | <p>Government cannot expect what it had previously. Fewer interventions/ audits by government.</p> <p>The Service has developed systems that follow the principles of the requirements of bodies like FSA so can show some level of compliance, but service isn't operating to the letter of the current Code. This has been noted by the Agency and they are now seeking to drive all authorities back into line with the Code, with the threat of ministerial direction if required. The major changes envisaged for the Code have been delayed until 2027. And whilst this change is likely to move closer to the WRS model of operation, it is unlikely to wholly embrace the intelligence-led approach. See below for specific risk.</p> <p>Environmental reporting for Local Air Quality Management, Pollution Prevention and Control and Private Water Supply Inspection reports to Defra and DWI have received positive responses with no issues of concern raised by these bodies*.</p> |
| Compliance with Food Code of Practice | Adverse comments following audits. FSA, can seek ministerial direction to make LAs comply with its Code of Practice | On-going | High | High | Amber/ Red | <p>This is a subset of the section above line as FSA is the only body currently with a statutory code that LAs must have significant regard to, plus it has the power to apply for Ministerial Orders to force LAs to comply with the letter of the Code.</p> <p>Until recently the Agency appears to have been happy to allow LAs to experiment as long as they abide by the spirit of the code and resource the function at a reasonable level. It has now changed tack and is seeking to push local authorities to operate much more closely to the letter of the code in an effort to create additional resource. A paper went to the FSA Boar at the end of 2023, expressing concern about resourcing levels in both Env Health and Trading</p> |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|----------|-----|------|--------------|--|
| | | | | | | <p>Standards resulting in a public call for local and central government to work together to remedy this.</p> <p>The partners are looking to make a significant investment in resources to address most of the Agency's concerns, but it will not allow full compliance with the Code. Having said this, there is limited risk in the variations that will remain in place and full compliance with the code would require a full redesign of operations within Community EH and further financial investment.</p> |
| Failure to deliver external contract work at the level expected by the business or local authority with whom we have the contract | Damage to reputation, loss of future income streams, financial impact of paying damages | On-going | Low | High | Green | <p>Ensure contract negotiations are clear on performance criteria and these are clearly recorded in the final documentation. Monthly reviews against performance criteria. Select staff to ensure competence of those undertaking work outside Worcestershire. Maintain strong links with the customer's monitoring staff. Intervene early with corrective action</p> |

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WRS Board

Date: 29th February 2024

Title: Activity and Performance Data Quarter 3 2023/4

Recommendation

That the Board notes the Report and that members use the contents of the activity data in their own reporting back to fellow members of the partner authorities.

Background

The detail of the report focuses on the third quarter of 2023/24, 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 number of dog control cases recorded by WRS during the year to date is 37% higher than in 2021-22, but only 12% above 2022-23 levels. Approximately 89% of cases have related to stray or lost dogs, with most of these cases relating to "contained strays" (dogs found and held by members of the public). Overall, 61% of strays have been reunited with their owners, however, figures vary significantly between local authorities. Stray dogs levels reported across Worcestershire are higher now than pre-pandemic levels and a greater number of stray dogs are picked up with welfare concerns.

WRS receives a relatively low number of dog control complaints. Of the 56 complaints recorded during the year to date, 30 have related to dog fouling and persistent straying, 13 have related to dangerous dogs, and 11 have related to welfare.

The number of food safety cases recorded by WRS during the year to date is 33% lower than in 2021-22, but only 8% lower than 2022-23. Many of the food safety cases logged are enquiries such as requests for business advice or requests for export health certificates. Of the 330 food complaints



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recorded so far this year, 70% have related to issues with products such as poor quality or the presence of foreign objects, whilst 30% have related to poor hygiene standards or practices.

Of the 1,120 interventions conducted at businesses included in the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) during the year to date, 37 have been rated as non-compliant (0, 1 or 2). Approximately three quarters of these ratings were issued to takeaways, restaurants, or pubs.

Quarter 3 saw health and safety work generally following trends. The number of health and safety at work cases recorded by WRS during the year to date is 30% lower than 2021-22, but only 16% lower than 2022-23. Approximately 47% of cases have been reports of accidents, with most of these cases relating to injuries where a worker was incapacitated for more than seven days or injuries to members of the public. Slips, trips, and falls (whether on the same level or from height) continue to be the most prominent cause of accidents occurring in workplaces. Investigation work on a number of serious accidents remains on-going.

Licensing application numbers during Q3 appeared to remain on trend, whereas there was another slight increase in complaints and enquiries. The number of licensing cases recorded by WRS during the year to date is 6% lower than 2021-22, but 4% higher than 2022-23. Approximately 66% of cases have been applications and registrations; with 28% of these cases relating to private hire licences and 26% relating to temporary events.

As with food, WRS receives a higher number of enquiries about licensing matters than complaints about licensed activity or unlicensed operators. Based on the 473 actual complaints recorded during the year to date, 219 have related to taxi licensing, 126 have related to alcohol licensing, and 91 have related to animal licensing (such as unlicensed dog breeding).

The number of planning enquiries completed by WRS during the year to date is 24% lower than 2021-22, but 8% higher than in 2022-23. Approximately 93% of enquiries have been requests for support with consultations, with 47% of these relating to contaminated land. Around 14% of enquiries were completed on a contractual basis for local authorities outside of the county.

Members will see that the fall in nuisance complaints through quarter 3 mirrors previous seasonal patterns. The number of pollution cases recorded during the year to date is 20% lower than 2021-22, and 10% lower than 2022-23. It should be noted, however, that case totals are broadly in line with seasonal variations. Approximately 73% of cases have related to noise nuisances, with noise from domestic properties such as noise from barking dogs or noise from audio-visual equipment the most prominent sources. A further 12% of cases have related to nuisances caused by smoke, fumes, and gases such as the burning of domestic waste or dust from construction sites.

The number of public health cases (i.e., accumulations, pests, public burials and similar,) recorded during the year to date is 30% lower than 2021-22, but 7% higher than 2022-23. Approximately 60% of cases have related to pest control, such as enquiries about domestic treatments, enquires about sewer



baiting, or complaints about pest control issues caused by the actions of neighbouring residents or businesses. A further 24% of cases have been complaints relating to accumulations at domestic properties which can also include pest control issues.

Of the 627 domestic treatments undertaken during the year to date, approximately 46% have been due to issues with rats, 26% have been due to issues with wasps, and 8% have been due to issues with bed bugs. Approximately 64% of treatments have taken place at properties in the Redditch or Wychavon districts.

Performance

Quarter 3 is another more limited reporting period. The non-business customer measure at 60.7%, is slightly lower than at the same point in 2021/2 (62.5%,) but higher than the same point last year (57.9%.) This probably reflects the reduced demand for nuisance work during the period, improving the service's ability to respond in a timely fashion. Having reviewed the data, the speed of addressing the issue and whether the overall outcome meets expectations still need improvement. The latter may need clear conversations at the beginning of the process as to the potential likelihood of being able to achieve the change someone wants to see. Numbers who felt better equipped to deal with future issues at 55.7% is slightly higher than at the same point in the previous 2-years.

Business customer satisfaction has fallen again this quarter to 92%. Team Managers have been asked to investigate this as there is no obvious reason for this beyond, we have had a number of disputed food hygiene ratings.

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

The ratio of compliments to complaints remains good at 77 to 19.

Staff sickness has increased from 1.42 days per FTE to 1.89 days per FTE cumulative for the year. This is less than the level at the same point in the previous 2-years (2.44, 2.94), but slightly above the level in the previous year to that (1.65.) Sickness remains well below pre-pandemic levels with 2019/20 having 3.82, and 2018/19 having 3.26 days per FTE at the same point in the year.

Contact Points

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Background Papers

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



Agenda Item 7

Appendix B: Performance indicator table

Table of Pls 2023/24

| Indicator | Reporting period | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4/ Outrun |
|---|------------------------------------|------|--|------|---|
| 1. % of service requests where resolution is achieved to customers satisfaction | Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative | 69.3 | 64.4 | 60.7 | |
| 2. % of service requests where resolution is achieved to business satisfaction | Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative | 97 | 94.5 | 92.0 | |
| 3. % businesses broadly compliant at first assessment/ inspection | Annually | 98.4 | Bromsgrove 99.3 Malvern Hills 98.6 Redditch 98.3 Worcester City 99.5 Wychavon 98.7 Wyre Forest 97.5 Worcestershire 98.7 | 98.5 | Bromsgrove Malvern Hills Redditch Worcester City Wychavon Wyre Forest Worcestershire |
| 4. % of food businesses scoring 0,1 or 2 at 1 st April each year | Annually | 1.6 | Bromsgrove 0.7 Malvern Hills 1.4 Redditch 1.7 Worcester City 0.5 Wychavon 1.5 Wyre Forest 2.5 Worcestershire 1.3 | 1.5 | Bromsgrove Malvern Hills Redditch Worcester City Wychavon Wyre Forest Worcestershire |
| 5 % of drivers licence renewal applications issued within 5 working days of receipt of a complete application | 6-monthly | NA | 93.9 | NA | |
| 6 % of vehicles found to be defective whilst in service Number of vehicles found to be defective by district and the percentage this | 6-monthly | NA | 34 = 2.19% of 1550 vehicles on the road county-wide BDC 4 MHDC 2 RBC 18 WC 7 WDC 0 WFDC 3 | NA | |



Agenda Item 7

| | | | | | | |
|----|---|---------------------------------------|-------------------|--|-------------------|---|
| | represents of the fleet county-wide | | | | | |
| 7 | % of service requests where customer indicates they feel better equipped to deal with issues themselves in future | Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative | 68.8 | 60 | 55.7 | |
| 8 | Review of register of complaints/compliments | Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative | 4/33 | 7/59 | 19/77 | |
| 9 | Annual staff sickness absence at public sector average or better | Quarterly NB: figure is cumulative | 0.76 days per FTE | 1.42 days per FTE | 1.89 days per FTE | |
| 10 | % of staff who enjoy working for WRS | Annually | NA | NA | NA | |
| 11 | % of licensed businesses subject to allegations of not upholding the 4 licensing objectives | 6-monthly | NA | Bromsgrove 6.8 Malvern Hills 2.3 Redditch 3.0 Worcester City 6.9 Wychavon 1.4 Wyre Forest 6.6 Worcestershire 5.0 | NA | Bromsgrove Malvern Hills Redditch Worcester City Wychavon Wyre Forest Worcestershire |
| 12 | Rate of noise complaint per 1000 head of population | 6-monthly | NA | Bromsgrove 0.71 Malvern Hills 0.65 Redditch 0.57 Worcester City 0.97 Wychavon 0.72 Wyre Forest 0.86 Worcestershire 0.79 | NA | Bromsgrove Malvern Hills Redditch Worcester City Wychavon Wyre Forest Worcestershire |
| 13 | Total income expressed as a % of district base revenue | 6-monthly | NA | £204,718, which is 6.8% as a proportion of the 2016/17 revenue budget figure (£3,017,000) | NA | |



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| | | | | | |
|---|----------|----|----|----|--|
| budget (16/17) | | | | | |
| 14 Cost of regulatory services per head of population (Calculation will offset income against revenue budget) | Annually | NA | NA | NA | |



Worcestershire
Regulatory Services

Supporting and protecting you

Activity Report | 2023-24



Bromsgrove
District Council
www.bromsgrove.gov.uk



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



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



Worcester
CITY COUNCIL



WYCHAVON
DISTRICT COUNCIL
good services, good value



Wyre Forest
District Council

Foreword

Welcome to the third activity report for 2023/24. It follows the familiar format that long standing Board members will have seen many times. This covers the period 1st October to 31st December 2023, but the graphs and tables allow comparison with the data in previous quarters and years. One thing you will see is that each quarter point has a number against the graph line to show the number of matter that this refers to. This came up at Board and we hope this change more informative than trying to compare things on the y-axis scale.

Stray dog numbers increased slightly from Q2 but did not get back to the peak in Q1. Following a fall in dog control complaints last quarter, we have seen a jump back up towards the peak seen in Q2 of 2022/3. Overall this year, dog control complaints are currently higher than in either of the previous two years.

Food cases (complaints and enquiries,) fell slightly on the peak on Q2 and remains above the trend line, however overall numbers in 2023/4 are lower than in the previous 2-years. A good number (over 350,) food interventions under FHRS also took place. The uptick in the number of accidents reported continued to plateau this quarter and numbers of complaints and enquiries on health and safety fell slightly.

Information requests remained relatively unchanged between Q2 and Q3, but are higher than in Q1. Requests for support in the planning system increased slightly but in line with if slightly above the trend line. It looks like 2023/4 will be busier than last year for planning support but we appear unlikely to reach the high of 2021/2.

Licensing application work continues to follow previous trends, at levels close to what would be anticipated, but complaints and enquiries was up again. Overall numbers are likely to exceed 2022/3 but may not get to the levels seen in 2021/2.

Pollution and nuisance complaints followed their usual seasonal downward trend from Q2 throughout Q3. Overall numbers appear lower this year because of the relatively poor Summer weather, but this did follow on from a good Spring, which meant increases in workload had started earlier. Looking at the figures, Q3 seems to have been more or less on a par with previous years. This demonstrates what I have always said about nuisance complaint levels appearing inextricably linked to the weather. Public Health related complaints (accumulations, vermin, public burials, etc,) fell this quarter, heading back towards the trend line.

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

Community Environmental Health

Updates from David Mellors (Environmental Health And Trading Standards Manager)

Quarter One

The team continued its food recovery programme into 2023/4 and conducted 370 interventions at food businesses during the quarter. Some 97% of food premises across the county are rated compliant or better. However, where unsatisfactory standards were found, swift remedial action was taken, and a Simple Caution was issued to a non-compliant meat processing premises in Bromsgrove.

Officers have an ongoing investigation into premises in Redditch which prepared a meal for an employee who subsequently suffered an anaphylactic shock and are currently investigating a serious accident in Worcester where a member of the public fell down a lift shaft.

Sadly, the team are also investigating fatalities including the death of a member of the public involved in a white-collar boxing event and a child thrown from a vehicle involved in a sporting event.

However, prevention is better than cure and your Officers were proactively involved during the period in chairing Safety Advisory Groups [SAGs], whereby enforcement partners including the Police, Fire and Rescue and the Ambulance Service come together to provide advice to organisers to support them in ensuring the safety of their events. These included Worcester Racecourse, the Battle of Evesham, Three Counties Rally, Worcester Passion Play and the Worcester Balloon Festival.

A noise abatement notice was served in connection with a Bromsgrove property in January due to noise from barking dogs. The notice was subsequently breached this quarter and legal proceedings are now pending.

Officers contributed to Worcester City's consultation response in respect of Airbnb premises and engaged with Central Government in respect of emissions from wood burners.

Quarter Two

Worcestershire has continued to be a draw for activities with a wide range of events and festivals either taking place or being organised in this reporting period. Officers were proactively involved in chairing Safety Advisory Groups (whereby enforcement partners including the Police, Fire and Rescue and the Ambulance Service come together) to provide advice to organisers to support them in ensuring the safety of their events. In Quarter 2 these included The Upton Blues Festival, The Battle of Evesham event, the Worcester Victoria Christmas Fayre preparations and pre-season meetings for both Bromsgrove Sporting and Kidderminster Harriers football clubs.

WRS provides a contracted service to the County Council in respect of that authority's Safety at Sports Grounds responsibilities. This work resulted in General Safety Certificates being issued to Kidderminster Harriers FC, Bromsgrove Sporting FC and Sixways stadium in Q2. We shall be informing you further of our Safety at Sports Grounds and Safety Advisory Group activities by way of an information report to be presented at your February Board meeting.

The team also engaged in proactive compliance work in respect of The Sunshine, App Fest and Drunken Monkey festivals.

Despite significant demand on the team throughout the Summer, we still conducted 350 interventions at food businesses during the quarter. Some 97% of food premises across the county are rated compliant or better. However, where unsatisfactory standards were found, swift remedial action was taken. A Simple Caution was issued to a non-compliant bakery in Kidderminster for a failure to keep the premises clean and in good repair and condition, failure to store raw materials and ingredients appropriately, inadequate procedures in place to control pests and lack of training and food safety procedures.

The Food Standards Agency has shown an interest in the food safety work we carry out on your behalf, and we engaged with them during the period to provide assurance as to the interventions we have completed and those we have planned for the rest of the year. Your Officers have also been successful in attracting another major national food manufacturer into a primary authority agreement, whereby WRS provides assured advice for which we can charge as part of our income generation activities.

The investigations into a fatality in Redditch where an employee suffered an anaphylactic shock, the fatality concerning a member of the public participating in a white-collar boxing event in Worcester and the serious accident in Worcester where a member of the public fell down a lift shaft are all ongoing.

The better than usual Spring weather led to an earlier start in the increase in workload and the Summer is always a busy time for nuisance work. Notices were served in respect of a defective drainage system in Bromsgrove and an extract ventilation system to food premises causing noise and odour nuisance to residents in Worcester.

The team continues to contribute to the Serious Organised Crime Partnerships across the county through North Worcestershire MATES, MAT-G Worcester and MAT-G Malvern & Worcester.

This activity report serves to illustrate the diversity and complexity of work carried out by the team, and the depth and range of expertise required.

Quarter Three

The team continues to work with businesses to limit future potential noise nuisance from music at pubs and clubs that were reported as being problematic during the summer. We are proactively seeking specific agreements aimed at limiting disturbances to residents for the coming season. As part of our intelligence gathering outside of the hectic summer period, CEH and Licensing officers worked together in carrying out a series of monitoring visits to Bewdley targeted at premises having pre-identified issues.

Officers met with the operators of a local pub that has live music in the beer garden to advise them how to avoid potential noise nuisance to neighbours and the team were also able to resolve the noise nuisance caused by dogs barking at a commercial kennels without the need for prosecution.

A bakery in Kidderminster was issued with a Simple Caution in October for contraventions of the Food Safety & Hygiene Regulations. The food business operator had failed to keep the premises clean and in good repair and had failed to provide food handlers with adequate supervision and training in food hygiene. Officers were also involved in Worcester's Victorian Fayre inspections where drops in compliance standards were found. One trader from the London area who has caused problems previously was again found unsatisfactory and will not be accepted back in 2024.

The Food Standards Agency escalated its intervention into our food safety management Covid recovery programme and a report on this is contained within your Board papers.

Whilst food businesses are continuing to close citing staffing and financial issues, we continue to receive some 70 new registrations each month. There is a noticeable swing to home based and mobile catering activities rather than high street operations. Another development on the food front is businesses registering multiple trading names at one premises address, an activity which can extend their presence on platforms such as Just Eat and Deliveroo. The approved national Food Standards Agency IT systems are yet to catch up and are not designed to cope with this approach. We are aware of this and are ahead of the game in terms of collecting and recording intelligence on such premises on our own systems.

Our health and safety investigations into two fatalities, carried out in collaboration with West Mercia Police and the Coroner's Office, continue. The team are also investigating a very serious incident involving a person who received serious injuries when a lift's safety mechanisms failed to operate.

Our Health & Safety lead presented the annual report to the Planning and regulatory Committee of Worcestershire County Council regarding the activities that WRS carries out on their behalf in respect of safety at sports grounds. An information report to advise members of this work is planned for a future Board meeting. Other activities in this area included facilitating the Safety Advisory Groups for events being planned at Worcestershire County Cricket Ground and the Christmas Charity convoy, and the issue of a new General Safety Certificate for one of our local football clubs.

Licensing

Updates from Kiran Lahel (Licensing And Support Services Manager)

Quarter One

The team commenced Quarter 1 busier than the start of Quarter 4 with Licensing applications and queries up compared to this time last quarter. Officers encourage the return of fully completed applications however there still remain many where officers need to chase for information which can cause a bottleneck in the system. The introduction of payment automation will see a reduction in this and bring in long term efficiencies.

Taxi queries remain the highest area of contact and officers proceed to meet the demands of a continuously growing number of licensed drivers and vehicles across the County. The team continue with enforcement priorities in the night time economy with officers working with both the civil enforcement teams and West Mercia Police to carry out operations. Officers also carried out a Joint enforcement operation in Bromsgrove with Wolverhampton City Council due to a number of complaints regarding Wolverhampton licensed vehicles.

Officers have been out undertaking test purchase exercises across the County in regards to the requirements under the Equality Act. Taxi drivers have a legal obligation to accept assistance dogs in their vehicles unless they have medical condition which prevents them from doing so. Three out of the six districts have so far been tested with further testing planned for the remainder of the year.

Animal Licensing queries have also seen a steady increase and the team are working with the intelligence team to introduce a new process to deal with unlicensed breeders. Currently the guidance of what stipulates a licensed breeder is confusing for those that require a licence so the team continue to engage with DEFRA, the Canine Feline Sector Group and the Local Animal Welfare Group to Nationally review the guidance. There were two Zoo inspections that took place this quarter at the Falconry Centre and All things Wild and officers were happy with both visits so no immediate follow up visits are required.

Work in the Night Time Economy continues with officers engaging with West Mercia Police and district colleagues to carry out joint visits to events and premises which are of concern and where issues have been identified in previous years. Officers continue to attend pubwatch meetings, meetings with Worcester Bid and the district economic development teams to advise and keep abreast of any new developments in each district.

Finally Members training commenced towards the end of the quarter for all six districts and took a slightly different format than previous years, using roleplay in some districts and videos in others to allow more interaction than previously. Feedback has been positive and officers will continue to look at different ways to ensure engagement and momentum in these sessions.

Quarter Two

The Licensing team have continued to see a upward trajectory in both enquiries and applications as expected towards the summer months. The team actually had more queries regarding TENs applications and submissions in this period than the last two years so resources were prioritised accordingly.

Licensing Committees and sub committees across all six districts also commenced this quarter and all had quite a few new members undertaking Licensing for the first time so it was positive to see the changes made by the team to the Member's training had worked well.

There were two zoo inspections carried out by the team this quarter. One follow up at All things Wild and then the much larger annual joint inspection at West Midlands Safari Park which always involves a lot of pre-planning and takes places of a two day period. Both inspections went well with officers working with CEH colleagues and DEFRA on the West Midlands Safari Park to ensure compliance, licensing and health and safety requirements were being met accordingly.

There have been a number of joint visits taking place across the county with West Mercia Police Work to address issues identified in the Night Time economy (NTE) many of which have been resolved and not requiring further investigation. Those that have required extra monitoring have involved both the licensing and environmental health team working together with the police to conduct further monitoring of the situation.

The caravan inspections required to be undertaken in Wychavon and Worcester City were undertaken however there has been some follow up work that has been required to address non compliance. These remain ongoing with planning colleagues being consulted as and where necessary.

Animal Licensing work continues with both inspections and proactive monitoring. A result of such monitoring was a warrant being executed by the police and joint enforcement action being taken with licensing officers under both the Animal Welfare Act and the DWA (Dangerous Wild Animals Act) found a number of wild animals being kept (both dead and alive) at an address in the County. Licensing officers will now be taking formal action in this matter. Dog breeding complaints continue and are initially investigated by the Intelligence Team.

Quarter Three

Officers always see a small decline in applications at this time of year with a small spike just before Christmas. By this time all TENs for the Christmas period have already been submitted however queries and requests for service continue to rise which is not surprising based on previous years. The team having been working collectively with the Intelligence team and Technical Services team to consider a more effective way of handling licensing queries. This being done in parallel with the implementation of Victoria Form so we hope that more queries can be directed to self help in the future.

In Animal licensing a higher focus has been on carrying out inspections that the team slipped behind on in the summer periods. After the pandemic there was a decline in businesses renewing their licence but this has slowly returned back to pre-pandemic levels with renewals and new applications being submitted. In response to this the team have had to move resource around in the team to deal with this and are looking at how to deal with this area of working moving forward. In the background work on illegal dog breeding continues with the Intelligence team and officers have been attending meetings with colleagues nationally to review the current LIAR Regulations.

Taxi Compliance checks have continued in the County and with the increase in complaints of Wolverhampton licenced vehicles coming into the county the team have conducted one operation in Redditch where a number of vehicles were stopped and warnings given and another operation is being planned in Worcester City. Alongside these operations routine night time enforcement with partners continue and where issues are found these are followed up appropriately.

Work with businesses in the Night time economy continues and officers have recently been supporting Worcester BID in their efforts to make Worcester safe in the evening particularly for the vulnerable and women and girls with their project Worcester Safe Space. Officers have also been working with partners looking at a number of complaints in the Bewdley area and have deployed a NTE model to address these. If this is successful it will be a model that will be rolled out to deal with similar situations in the NTE.

Finally officers ended the quarter assisting colleagues in CEH and Worcester City with the Victorian Fayre which was a success as previous years.

Technical Services

Updates from Mark Cox (Technical Services Manager)

Quarter One

Air Quality

Following the successful award of an Air Quality Grant from DEFRA in Q4 2023, progress to start the planning and implementation of the grant was commenced. Progress on the selection and purchase of monitors progressed as well as location planning.

To identify measures for the Worcester City section of the Air Quality Action Plan and Air Quality Strategy, the structure of the AQ Steering Group was expanded to include 3 subgroups based on Transport & Planning, Public Health and Sustainability subject areas. These groups are working together to identify measures that will bring about the necessary air quality improvements. Work has commenced on identification of air quality improvement measures in Bromsgrove and Wyre Forest areas.

Contaminated Land

Contaminated land related work for the 6 Worcestershire Districts and Gloucester City and South Gloucestershire Councils continued, providing responses to environmental requests in relation to property sales, consultants enquiries and any other requests for info. Our work continues to involve a lot of complex sites with historical land use which are dealt with via the planning process in each of the districts. A few examples of particularly complex sites included:

The part demolition and site clearance of the former Blue Bird factory site in Bromsgrove for redevelopment to provide 116 residential dwellings (Use Class C3), consisting of both new dwellings and conversion of the Welfare and Administration buildings, along with associated landscaping; drainage; engineering; highways and access works.

The proposed development of a former Aluminium Foundry near Kidderminster into Energy and Resource Park.

The demolition of an old fuel depot in Gloucester and site remediation and associated earthworks to facilitate development for 70 residential dwellings with associated infrastructure and open space, to include creation of development platforms, provision of flood compensation and structures for ecological mitigation.

Engineering works to remediate site of an old Gas Works site in Gloucester.

Nuisance Planning and Permitting Processes

Our environmental health planning work for the 6 Worcestershire Districts plus Gloucester City and Tewkesbury continued including many new takeaways and a notable number of solar farms with battery storage.

We received a permit application for a new precious metal recovery process in Redditch which is also jointly regulated with the Environment Agency as well as dealing with planning matters relating to the same. Further to the requirements of the Industrial Emissions Directive all permits have been published on our website as well as routine For Gloucester, work was ongoing for A2 for solvent impregnation Permitting Application (170 representations) and Granting Part B for filament winding. A successful Prosecution of Strickland Trucks resulted in a conditional discharge after operating for over ten years without the required permit to control environmental pollution.

Homes for Ukraine Support Workers

Following the cessation of the support to Malvern Hills and Wychavon Councils with their Homes for Ukraine schemes, we continue to support Redditch and Bromsgrove by managing the scheme on their behalf with three from the former COVID Advisor team who act as support workers. All guests who come to the UK on the Homes for Ukraine scheme have a 3-year visa, and the council have a duty of care of the guests for the full 3-year period. The support workers continue with the safeguarding and welfare checks, also helping with rematching / rehoming process with some host and guest coming to the end of their sponsorship and sometimes where there is a relationship breakdown and are still providing a lot of after care when the guests become independent moving into a private rental accommodation such as helping set up bills and finding local schools etc.

Across the two districts there are 45 families still with hosts, 7 families moved into social housing, 22 families moved into private renting, 12 families return to Ukraine and 18 families moved to a different county or country. There have been 19 arrivals in 2023.

IT Development

As well as our normal day to day work, the first quarter of the financial year is always busy as we prepare and submit most of our government returns. During the quarter we also collaborated closely with our host IT as they implemented a new web-based telephone system. We also had similar involvement at the start of the process of changing the mobile phone provider for all staff and our cyber security training system.

We have worked on Service-wide projects, including the Automation Project and initial work to introduce a new mapping system for our back-office database. Over the quarter we have taken part in various activities designed to increase the security and resilience of the computer system we use. These activities include regular updates and patches to our main back-office system, record retention and deletions.

We have continued income generation work with IDOX database support for colleagues in Bromsgrove and Redditch Planning, Worcestershire Trading Standards, and Tewkesbury Borough Council's Environmental Health and Licensing teams.

Dog Warden Service

The stray dog service remains incredibly busy with an ever increasing number of dogs received with welfare concerns. Most dogs with welfare concerns are not being claimed by their owners putting pressure on the service to find homes for dogs with such complex needs as well as increased veterinary bills for the service and prospective new owners.

Quarter Two

Air quality

The contract to secure the purchase of 26 Air Quality Monitors (mainly funded by a Defra Grant) was agreed and detailed conversations on the proposed locations of the monitors have been completed.

We received notification from DEFRA that they are to commence enforcement of the Local Air Quality Management regime for the 4 areas of Worcestershire that have existing Air Quality Management areas (Worcester City, Bromsgrove, Wyre Forest and Wychavon) but do not have a recently updated or reviewed Air Quality Action Plan in place. A significant amount of work towards production of the Air Quality Action Plans and a County-wide Air Quality Strategy has been undertaken already. For Worcester progress has been in conjunction with Senior Officers at Worcestershire County Council Highways and Worcester City Council who jointly chair the Air Quality Steering Group. The 3 sub-groups based on Transport & Planning, Public Health and Sustainability subject areas have developed to bring forward measures for the AQAP process.

Planning and Permitting Processes

Our environmental health planning work for the 6 Worcestershire Districts plus Gloucester City and Tewkesbury continued including for Amcor Flexibles (Evesham) who upgraded their Regenerative Thermal Oxidizer (RTO) in September to comply with the new lower Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC) emission limit of 20mg/m². This was undertaken over two weeks during which the RTO was off-line. Notification letters were delivered to local residents and due to the communication programme, no complaints of odour were received by Amcor nor WRS. Also in Wychavon, Modern Packaging committed to installing a RTO to replace their bio-scrubber following the service of an Enforcement Notice relating to VOC emissions. A new Environmental Permit has been granted to Kaug Refinery Services (Redditch) for their Part B precious metals recovery activity and WRS will be representing the Borough Council by attending the County Planning Committee at the end of November for this matter. Finally, an updated Environmental Permit has been issued for Doncaster Castings (Wychavon).

For Gloucester as a commercial contract, a significant amount of work has been ongoing for A2 for solvent impregnation Permitting Application including a request for further information notice, preparation for a Committee Hearing and drafting the permit to operate.

Contaminated Land

Our contaminated land related work for the 6 Worcestershire Districts, Gloucester City and South Gloucestershire Councils continued throughout this period, including responding to a wide variety of planning consultations and discharge of conditions requests, providing responses to environmental information requests in relation to property sales and development sites, consultants enquiries and other requests for service as required. Our work continues to involve a lot of complex sites with various historical land uses which are dealt with via the planning process in each of the district areas. Examples of these sites include:-

Contract Chemicals in Gloucester which has seen numerous phases of ground investigation and assessment over the years as part of the proposed residential development. The latest involvement related to finalisation of gas protection measures to be installed in a number of the residential properties.

A small residential development on a former Nursey site in Cookhill with updated and revised site assessment.

Site on Chester Road in Kidderminster being developed for residential housing – review of site assessment and remediation strategy required due to historical underground fuel storage tanks and associated infrastructure that had given rise to a number of hotspots of hydrocarbon contamination.

We also continue to review the weekly planning lists for the Worcestershire District Councils which often flags up other applications requiring comment in respect of contamination that would otherwise be missed. One example includes a 16 dwelling development on a former historic nursery site in Sedgeberrow where various unknown tanks were present, and various applications for new build developments and extensions in areas where there were former factories or in close proximity to former landfill sites or other areas of unknown filled ground.

During this time we also added an ongoing contract with East Staffordshire Borough Council to our portfolio of work to assist them with their contaminated land planning work. This came about through one of the Contaminated Land Officer Groups where we represent WRS. We continue to show a presence at West Mercia, Gloucestershire, and Staffordshire groups which proves to be a great source for networking, information sharing and training.

WRS have updated a number of documents on the website in relation to a site determined as contaminated land in Redditch following interaction with one of the homeowners. This was to help clarify the information presented on the website and demonstrate the history of the properties including remediation.

A number of national and local consultations have also been responded to during this time including National Brownfield Forum review and screening of additional sites for the Bromsgrove District Council Plan Review.

Work has also begun on drafting the Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy for the 6 Worcestershire Districts to update previous versions that are now somewhat out of date.

Dog Warden Service

Sadly during Q2 we had four dead dogs reported as dumped. All were different breeds and we have gone public with the details to try and identify the owners and wider circumstances of these cases, with a view to taking enforcement action where appropriate. With so many difficulties with dogs post COVID our Senior Dog Warden, Pip Griffin was invited to Parliament to provide evidence to MPs in the Pet Abuse and Welfare Committee Inquiry into the post-pandemic health and welfare concerns of companion animals, including abuse and mutilation. We were the only Local Authority representative invited to provide oral evidence and our session was alongside the RSPCA and Local Government Association. Pip was able to provide first hand experience of the failings and frustrations of the current regulatory regime. Subjects such as dog breeding, animal welfare, ear cropping and tail docking were discussed.

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HOME EVENT GUIDE HELP SEARCH

PLAYER RSS

Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee
Tuesday 5 September 2023 Meeting started at 2.31pm, ended 5.09pm

AGENDA INDEX

14:31:17 Subject: Pet welfare and abuse

14:31:18 Witness(es): Dr Samantha Gaines, Head of Companion Animals, RSPCA; Pip Griffin, Senior Dog Warden, Worcestershire Regulatory Services; Marisa Heath, Adviser, Local Government and Animal Welfare Group

15:44:45 Witness(es): Bill Lambert, Health Welfare and Breeder Services Executive, The Kennel Club; Dr Gudrun Ravetz, Chief Veterinary Officer, Pets at Home; Alexandra Baker, Chief Operating Officer, Pet Industry Federation

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14:38:33 17:09:17

Planning Enforcement

The team have received 61 new cases from Bromsgrove and Redditch to investigate alleged breaches of control in this period. Existing caseloads also keep the team busy and where negotiation and for four cases informal approaches have been exhausted and warning letters being issued. A warning letter is the last resort requesting compliance in a set period of time before consideration of the next stage which is an enforcement action. The team issued two enforcement notices at sites across the two districts for noncompliance of complex matters. On one site the issue is unauthorised deposit of hardcore and subsequent creation of hardstanding to store machinery on in the green belt. The other site related to the creation of a stable block, associated hardstanding and gates. In both these circumstances all avenues of negotiation were exhausted and all elements of the enforcement notice required planning permission which they did not have. The team continues to support the Councils with their backlog of active cases

Homes for Ukraine Support Workers

As of July, the current 3 remaining COVID Advisor team members are continuing to assist with the Homes for Ukraine scheme as support workers in Bromsgrove and Redditch Council areas. Early July the team began the preparation for the Delta Return ready for completion at the end of July, for this process we needed to collate the data on our guests on the Homes for Ukraine scheme for the Home Office so that the Councils receive the correct funding for Q1. Also, in July we received notice from Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) of an additional homelessness grant for Homes for Ukraine. This means we have been able to put together more assistance to those on the scheme looking for independent accommodation in move into private rental accommodation, called “move on funding”.

All guests who come to the UK on the Homes for Ukraine scheme have a 3-year visa, and the council have a duty of care of the guests for the full 3-year period. The support workers continue with the safeguarding and welfare checks, also helping with rematching / rehoming process with some host and guest coming to the end of their sponsorship and sometimes where there is a relationship breakdown and are still providing a lot of after care when the guests become independent moving into a private rental accommodation such as helping set up bills and finding local schools etc.

Across the two districts there are currently 37 families still with hosts, 12 families who have moved into social housing and 28 families that have moved into private rental accommodation.

IT Development

As well as our normal day to day work, we have been involved in numerous projects in each of the service's teams to enhance service delivery. This quarter we did extensive preparation work with our Host IT and back-office support company with the aim of introducing a new and improved mapping system. The initial preparation stage was completed in this quarter, and most of the subsequent installation work is planned for the following quarter. This is an upgrade to the mapping used by many of the teams using geographical based information to complete tasks, such as contaminated land or planning support. We have been involved with other projects such as the Automation project and introduction of Taxi digital Identity records.

We have continued to provide Uniform support functions, development and training for others as commercial contracts. We currently do this for Bromsgrove and Redditch Council's Planning department, and for Tewkesbury Borough Council's Environmental Health and Licensing departments and Worcestershire County Council's Trading Standards team.

Quarter Three

Air Quality

Our work towards an updated Air Quality Action Plan for Worcester City continued apace with monthly meetings of the Air Quality Steering Group as well as separate technical groups for Public Health, Planning, Transport and Sustainability. Defra have agreed to extensions on the deadline for submission of Air Quality Action Plans for Worcester, Wyre Forest, Bromsgrove and Wychavon with much work still to be completed ahead of this.

Progress organising the installation of 26 real time air quality monitors continued including contract negotiations for the structural stability and electrical sockets required for installation. The monitors were agreed for installation in early January 2024 with the development of a bespoke web-portal to follow. A 3 year fixed-term air quality behaviour change post to link in with this project was also advertised and closed to applicants in mid-January 2024.

Planning and Permitting Processes

For permitted processes, a new A2 solvent Impregnation permit was approved by Gloucester Licensing Committee on 20th November which officers from WRS attended to give technical guidance to Gloucester City Council under contract. Following the issuing of the permit, subsequent weekly meetings have taken place subsequently to discuss compliance with the outstanding BAT Conclusion compliance and a small number of noise complaints linked to the site.

A revised A2 permit for the brick manufacturing activities at Wienerberger's Hartlebury Work was issued. Applications were received and processes for Concrete Plants in Gloucester and Malvern Hills together with a new Petrol Filling Station in Gloucester.

Contaminated Land

Whilst not Worcestershire, interesting sites that have recently been dealt with under income generation contracts include the National Brewery Centre in Burton on Trent, where an existing museum and archive is being converted into their office Headquarters. Another is the redevelopment of a former Debenhams site in Gloucester where excavation of the courtyard a crypt and 114 skeletons were unearthed at much shallower depths than expected. This now means all earthworks are being undertaken in the presence of an archaeologist. This and other restrictions on site have impacted some of the contaminated land investigations and required more input from WRS to help address outstanding issues. WRS have been consulted on some retrospective planning applications that can present issues in terms of contaminated land as it is more difficult to undertake suitable assessment on sites that have been developed. If significant risks are encountered requiring further works it would be much more challenging, if not impossible, to implement certain remediation techniques or mitigation in these cases and have significant cost implications. For this reason contaminated land conditions are pre-commencement requiring suitable assessment to be undertaken prior to development. It is understood one of the cases is with planning enforcement due to a number of different issues.

COVID Advisors (Homes for Ukraine Support Workers)

From October, the current 2 remaining COVID Advisors continued to assist with the Homes for Ukraine scheme along with a Principal Officer managing the scheme in Bromsgrove and Redditch.

In early October the team began the preparation for the Delta Return ready for completion at the end of the month, for this process we needed to collate the data on our guests on the Homes for Ukraine scheme for the Home Office so that the Councils receive the correct funding for Q2. In November we received notice from Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) the extension of “thank you” payments into the third year for Homes for Ukraine sponsors across the UK, with the payment remaining at £500 per month. All guests who come to the UK on the Homes for Ukraine scheme have a 3-year visa, and the council have a duty of care of the guests for the full 3-year period. The support workers continue with the safeguarding and welfare checks, also helping with rematching / rehoming process with some host and guest coming to the end of their sponsorship and sometimes where there is a relationship breakdown and are still providing a lot of after care when the guests become independent moving into a private rental accommodation such as helping set up bills and finding local schools etc. Across the two districts there are 36 families still with hosts, we had 8 new arrivals in Q3.

IT Development

Work continues with several projects which cover all the teams within the service aimed to enhance service delivery. This quarter we worked with our IT host to complete the move to a new mobile phone service provider, which will produce significant savings. We also worked with our IT host to introduce a new cyber security awareness and training system, which is all part of keeping the service cyber safe. We have continued our work on the introduction of a new mapping system and a complete refresh of our gazetteer. The service gazetteer is used to enable different service elements to have sight of each other’s involvement and ensure efficiency and consideration for wider service provision.

Dog Warden Service

During Q3 the dog warden service began to see an big impact on the service following the new government legislation that meant XL Bully’s would become a banned breed. The dog wardens have regrettably had to put to sleep 18 dogs during this 3 month period, in 2022 we only had 6 dogs we had to euthanise in the entire year. This is due to a combination of XL Bully’s being dumped and some serious welfare cases where dogs had to be put to sleep for animal welfare. In October the service picked up a dog in one of the worst conditions we have ever seen, a young Staffordshire bull terrier that was starved, could barely stand, emaciated, covered in sores, scabs and mange, with overgrown nails and suffering from anaemia. Then, at Christmas we picked up 2 puppies that had been dumped in a plastic bag in freezing conditions. The process of finding charities who will take dogs for rehoming is also taking longer and proving more difficult due to charities and rescues being overrun.

Planning Enforcement

The team have received 61 new cases from Bromsgrove and Redditch to investigate alleged breaches of control during this period and have secured an injunction in relation to a problematic site which is a first for WRS’s planning enforcement officers and not a decision taken lightly. Cross working with other teams and outside agencies on some of the more complex cases has proved invaluable in tackling wider issues and concerns.

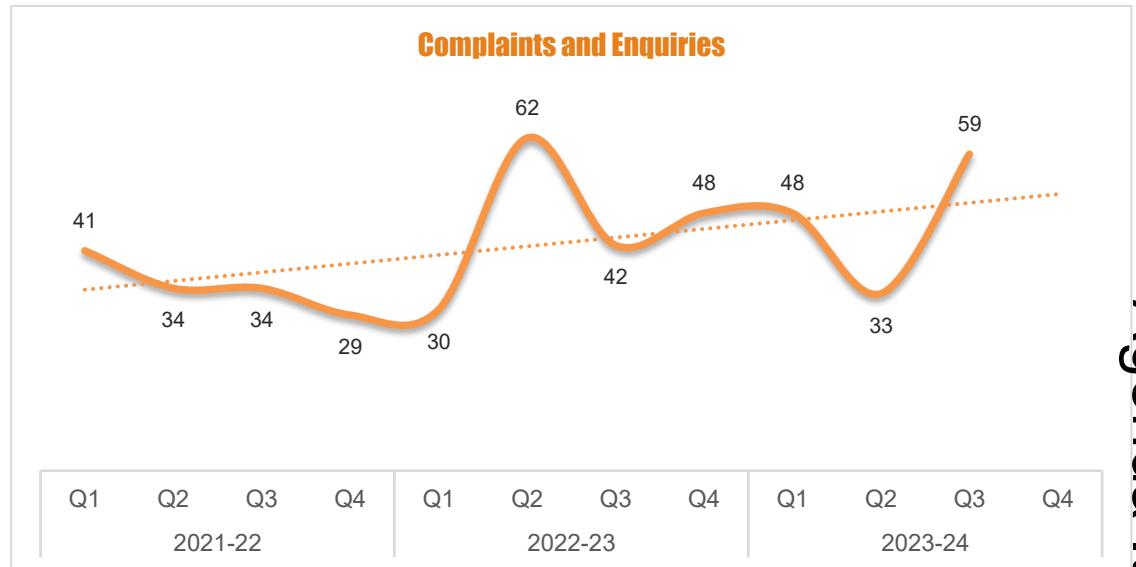
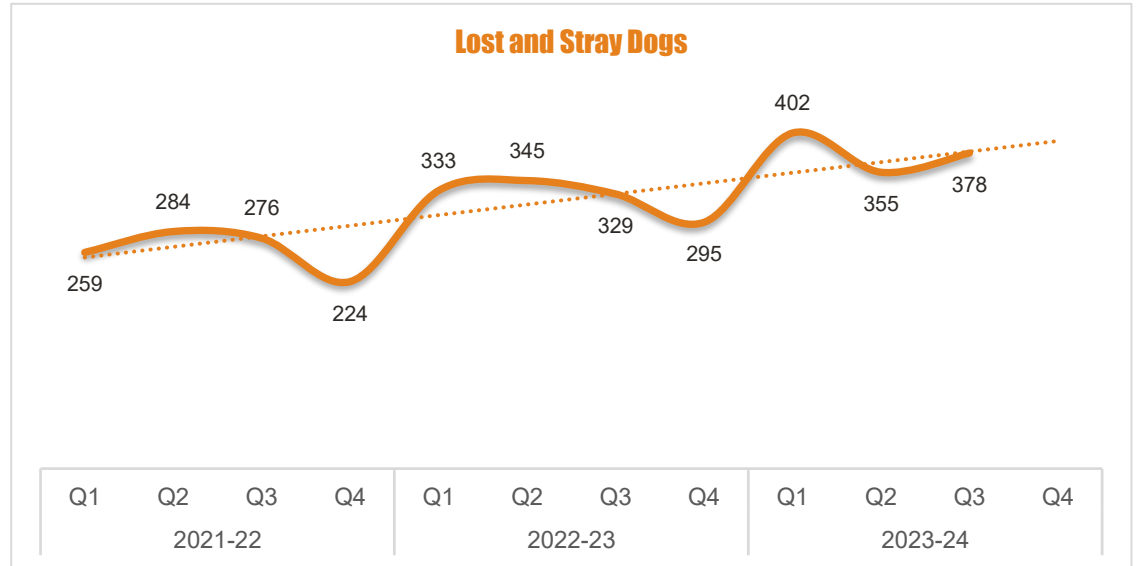
Dog Control

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.

Comments

The number of dog control cases recorded by WRS during the year to date is an increase of 37% compared to 2021-22, but an increase of 12% compared to 2022-23. Approximately 89% of cases have related to stray or lost dogs, with most of these cases relating to "contained strays" (dogs found and held by members of the public). Overall, 61% of strays have been reunited with their owners, however, figures vary significantly between local authorities. The increase in the number of stray dogs reported across Worcestershire is in contrast to pre-pandemic levels, whilst there continues to be a greater number of stray dogs which are picked up with welfare concerns.

In general terms, WRS receives a relatively low number of dog control complaints. Based on the 56 complaints recorded during the year to date, 30 have related to dog fouling and persistent straying, 13 have related to dangerous dogs, and 11 have related to welfare.



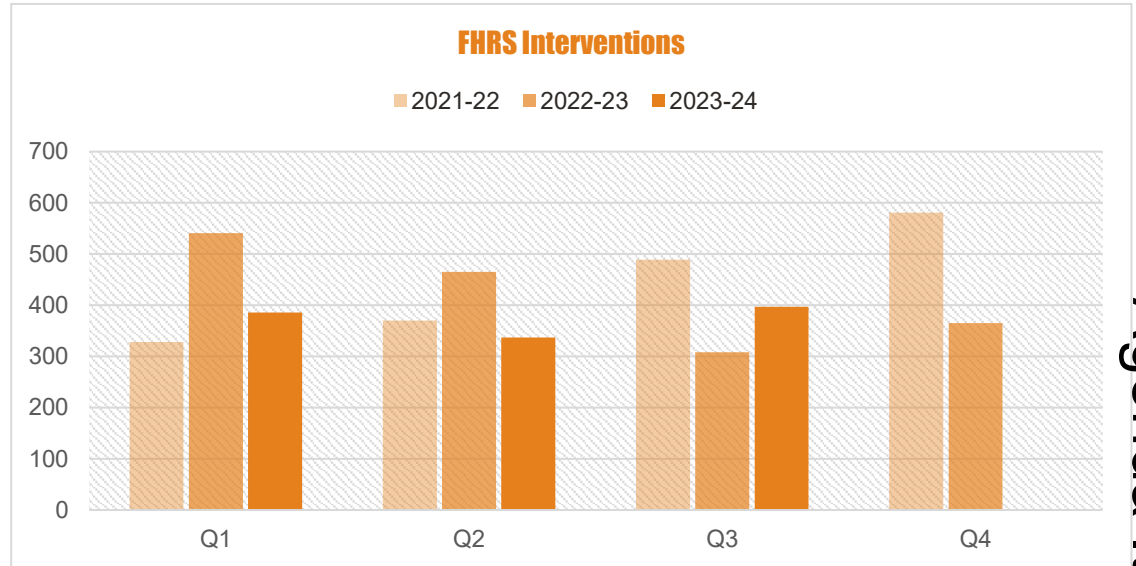
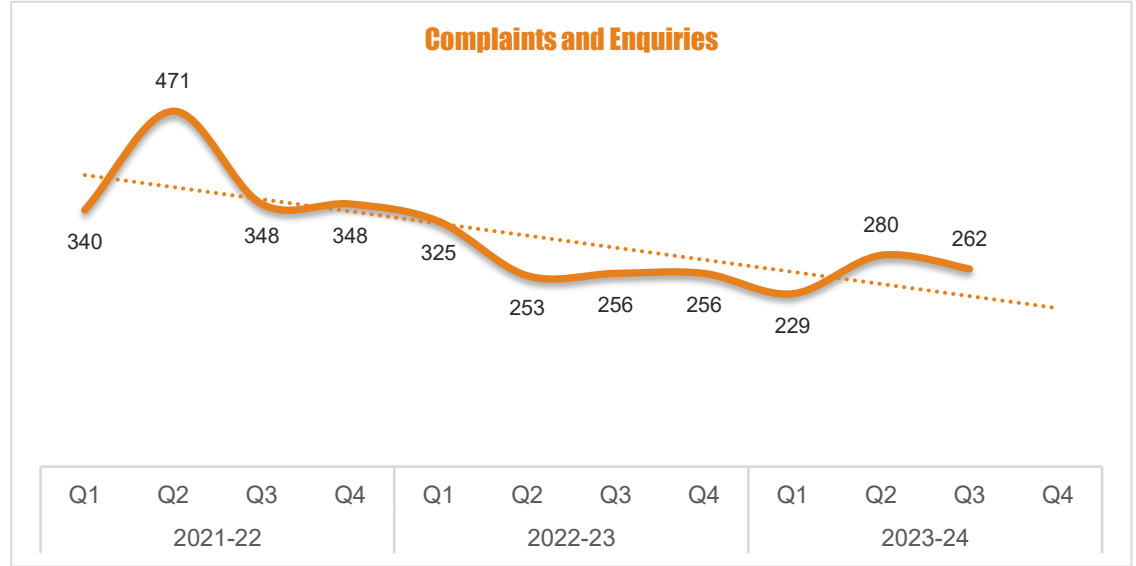
Food Safety

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.

Comments

The number of food safety cases recorded by WRS during the year to date is a reduction of 33% compared to 2021-22, and a reduction of 8% compared to 2022-23. In general terms, a higher proportion of food safety cases are enquiries such as requests for business advice or requests for export health certificates. Based on the 330 complaints recorded during the year to date, 70% have related to issues with products purchased from food businesses (e.g. poor quality food or the presence of foreign objects), whilst 30% have related to poor hygiene standards or practices.

Of the 1,120 interventions conducted at businesses included in the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) during the year to date, 37 were rated as non-compliant (0, 1 or 2). Approximately three quarters of these ratings were issued to takeaways, restaurants, or pubs.

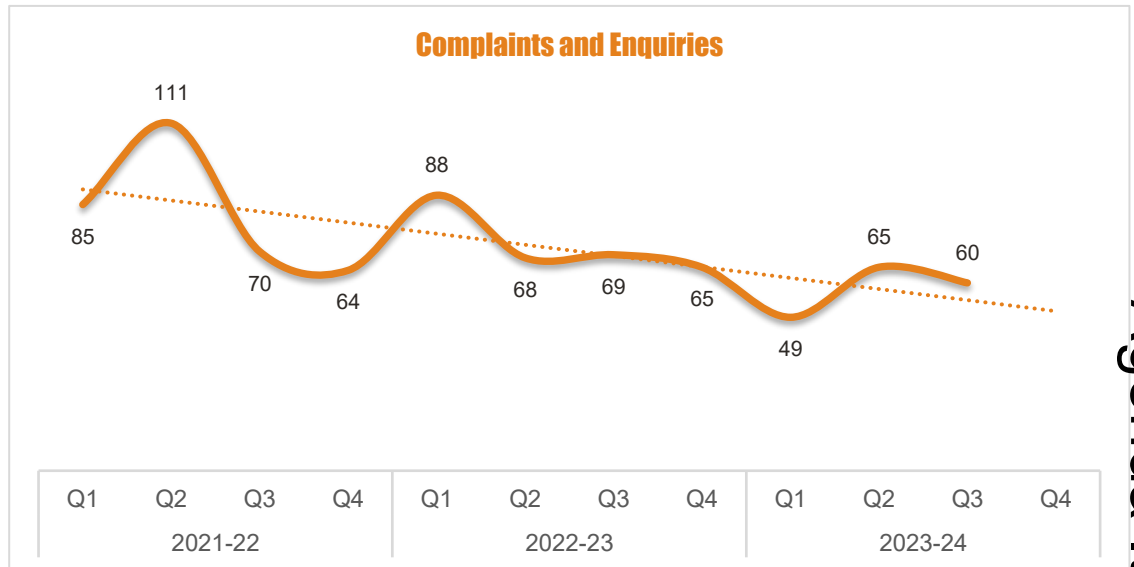
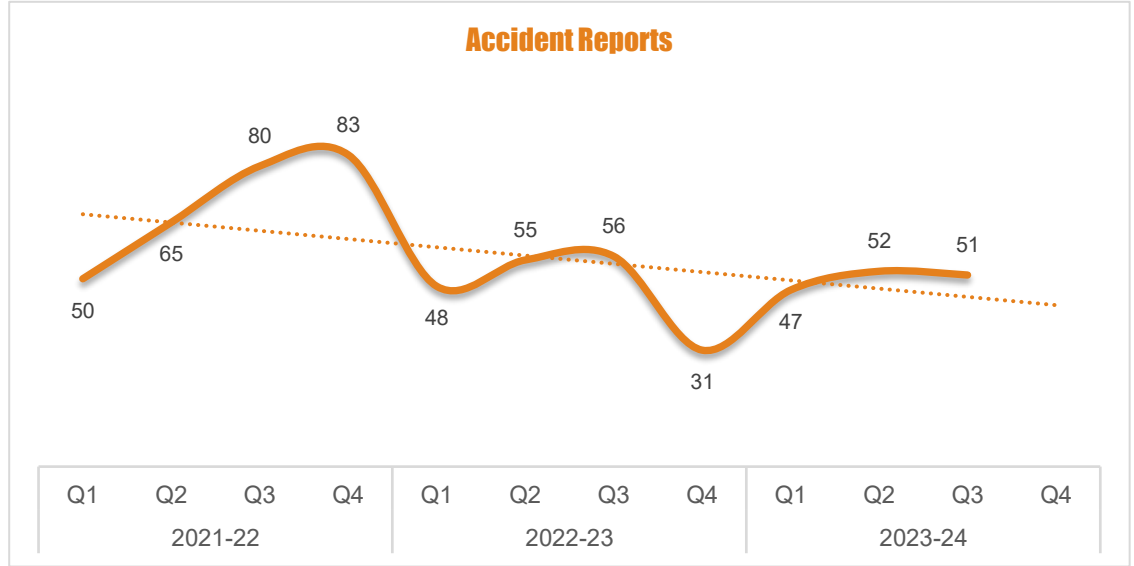


Health and Safety

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.

Comments

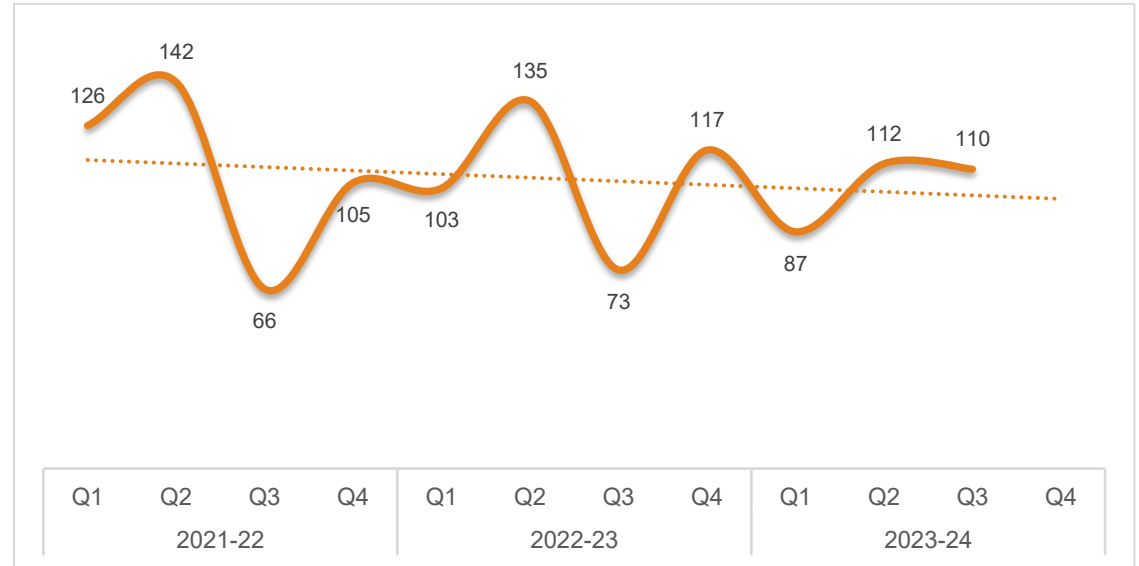
The number of health and safety at work cases recorded by WRS during the year to date is a reduction of 30% compared to 2021-22, and a reduction of 16% compared to 2022-23. Approximately 47% of cases have been reports of accidents, with most of these cases relating to injuries where a worker was incapacitated for more than seven days or injuries to members of the public. Slips, trips, and falls (whether on the same level or from height) continue to be the most prominent cause of accidents occurring in workplaces.



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)

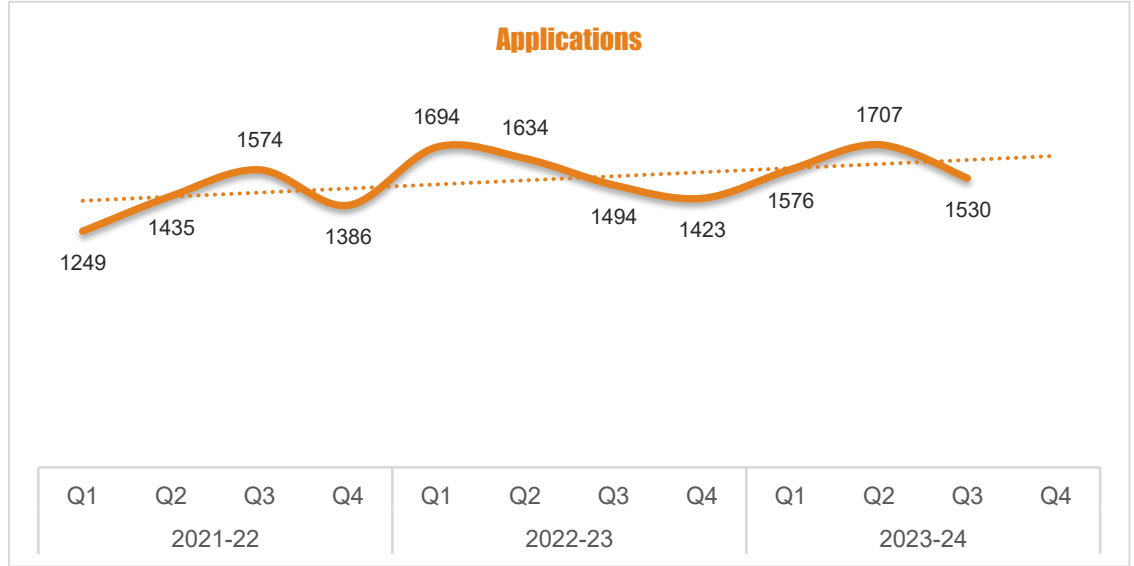


Licensing

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;

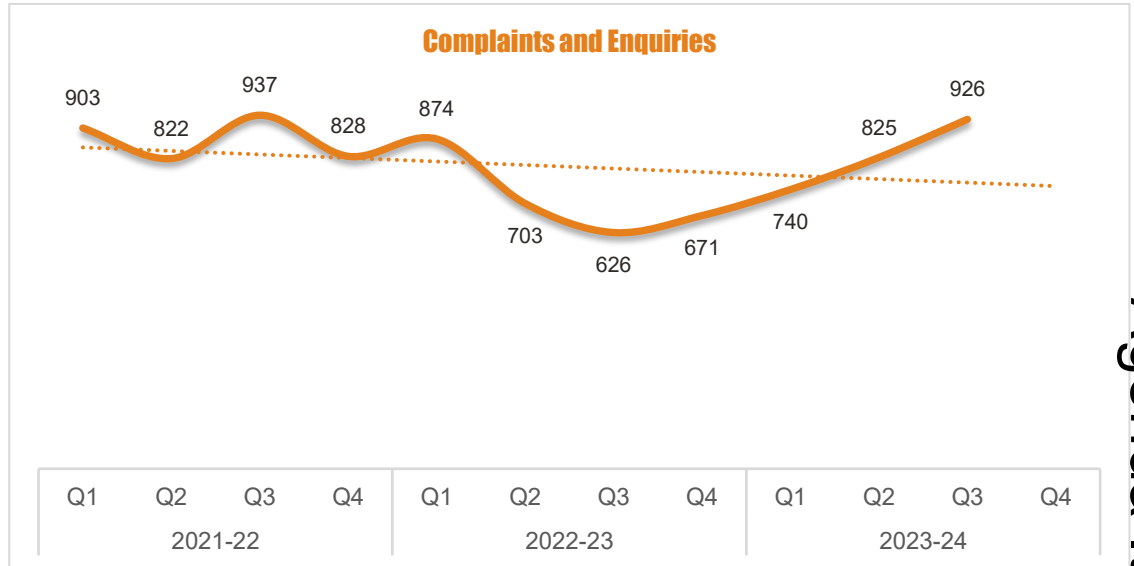
- Alcohol and entertainment (including gambling)
- Animals
- Caravans
- Scrap metal
- Sex establishments
- Skin piercing
- Street trading
- Taxis



Comments

The number of licensing cases recorded by WRS during the year to date is an increase of 6% compared to 2021-22, but a reduction of 4% compared to 2022-23. Approximately 66% of cases have been applications and registrations; with 28% of these cases relating to private hire licences and 26% relating to temporary events.

In general terms, WRS receives a higher number of enquiries about licensing matters than complaints about licensed activity or unlicensed operators. Based on the 473 complaints recorded during the year to date, 219 have related to taxi licensing, 126 have related to alcohol licensing, and 91 have related to animal licensing (such as unlicensed dog breeding).

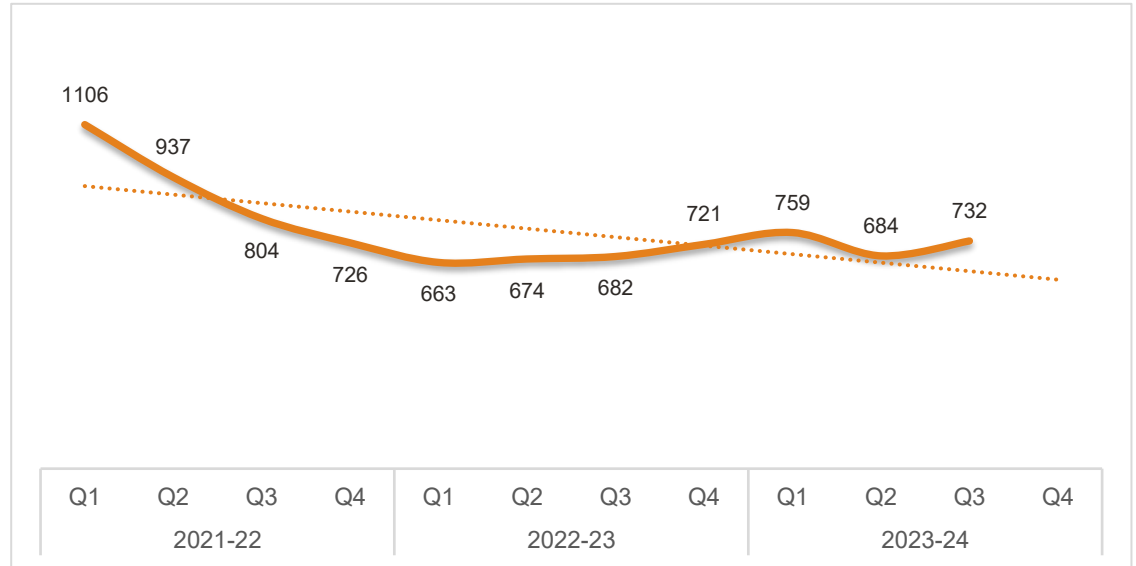


Planning

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



Comments

The number of planning enquiries completed by WRS during the year to date is a reduction of 24% compared to 2021-22, but an increase of 8% compared to 2022-23. Approximately 93% of enquiries have been consultations, whilst 47% have related to contaminated land. Around 14% of enquiries were completed, on a contractual basis, on behalf of other local authorities.

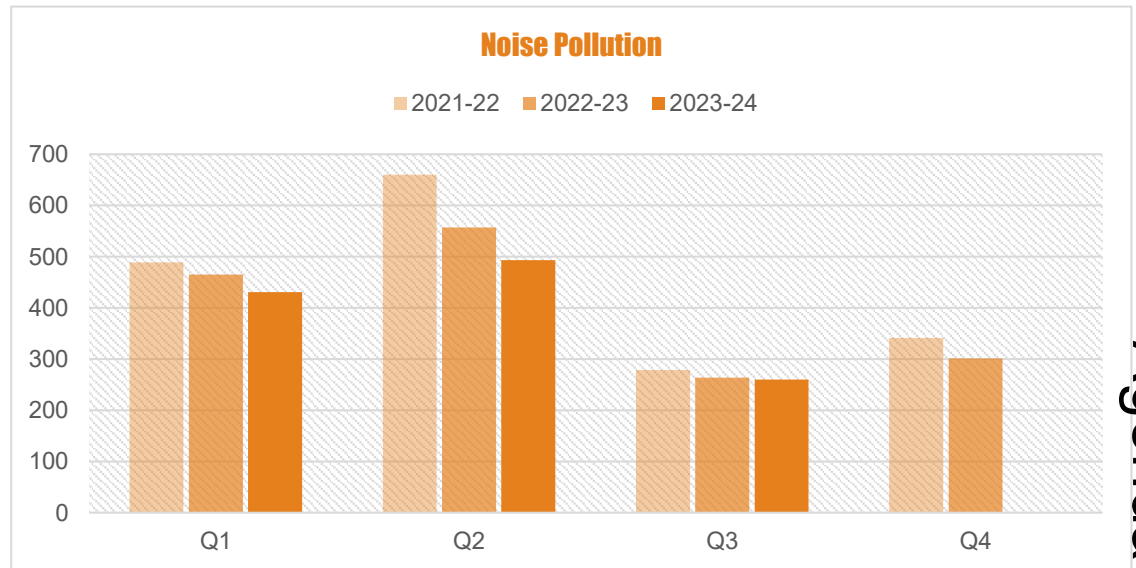
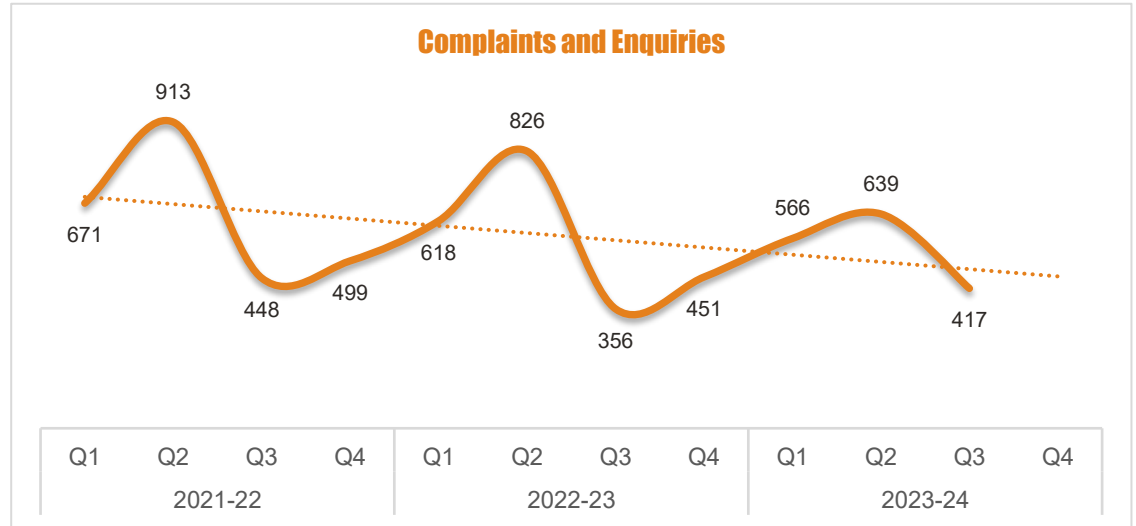
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Pollution

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.

Comments

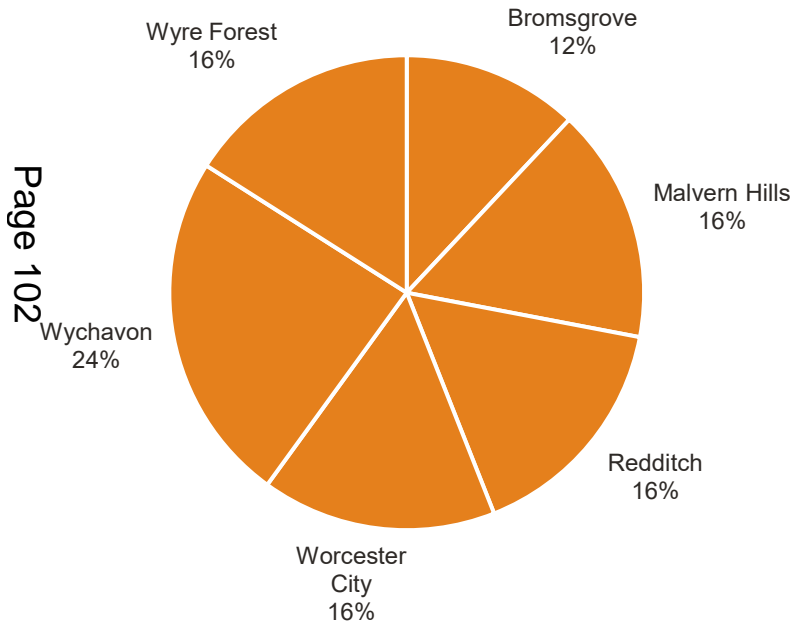
The number of pollution cases recorded by WRS during the year to date is a reduction of 20% compared to 2021-22, and a reduction of 10% compared to 2022-23. It should be noted, however, that case totals are broadly in line with seasonal variations. Approximately 73% of cases have related to noise nuisances, with noise from domestic properties (such as noise from barking or noise from audio-visual equipment) the most prominent sources. A further 12% of cases have related to nuisances caused by smoke, fumes, and gases such as the burning of domestic waste or dust from construction sites.



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.

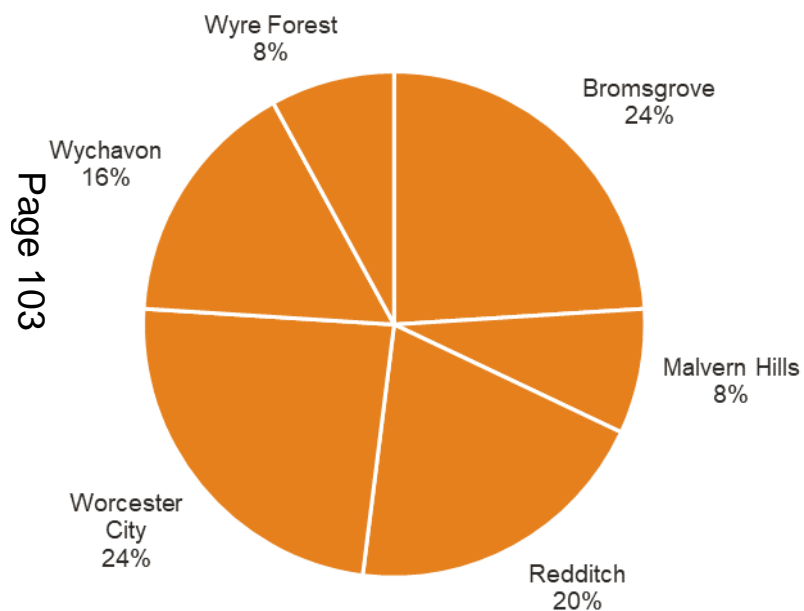


| Ward | Total | Population | Rate |
|--------------------------|-------|------------|------|
| Honeybourne And Pebworth | 13 | 2,844 | 4.57 |
| Ombersley | 11 | 2,459 | 4.47 |
| Avoncroft | 14 | 3,451 | 4.06 |
| Cathedral | 46 | 11,760 | 3.91 |
| Central (Redditch) | 21 | 6,841 | 3.07 |
| Priory | 13 | 4,384 | 2.97 |
| Lowes Hill | 8 | 2,854 | 2.80 |
| Droitwich Central | 7 | 2,621 | 2.67 |
| Warndon | 15 | 5,661 | 2.65 |
| Saint John | 22 | 8,736 | 2.52 |
| Wells | 8 | 3,256 | 2.46 |
| Norton | 9 | 3,876 | 2.32 |
| Droitwich West | 12 | 5,217 | 2.30 |
| Arboretum | 14 | 6,130 | 2.28 |
| Aggborough And Spennells | 20 | 8,774 | 2.28 |
| Greenlands | 21 | 9,462 | 2.22 |
| Upton Snodsbury | 6 | 2,705 | 2.22 |
| Matchborough | 13 | 6,029 | 2.16 |
| Ripple | 4 | 1,925 | 2.08 |
| Lickhill | 5 | 2,409 | 2.08 |
| Hallow | 4 | 1,941 | 2.06 |
| Broadwaters | 19 | 9,381 | 2.03 |
| Batchley And Brockhill | 18 | 8,930 | 2.02 |
| Bengeworth | 16 | 8,144 | 1.96 |
| Mitton | 19 | 10,110 | 1.88 |

Noise (2022/23)

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 last financial year and has been taken from the 2022-23 Activity Report.



| Ward | Total | Population | Rate |
|------------------------------|-------|------------|------|
| Marlbrook | 16 | 2,878 | 5.56 |
| Lickhill | 11 | 2,409 | 4.57 |
| Arboretum | 24 | 6,130 | 3.92 |
| Warndon | 22 | 5,661 | 3.89 |
| Headless Cross And Oakenshaw | 32 | 8,282 | 3.86 |
| Perryfields | 6 | 1,557 | 3.85 |
| Rainbow Hill | 20 | 5,418 | 3.69 |
| Cathedral | 43 | 11,760 | 3.66 |
| Teme Valley | 7 | 2,059 | 3.40 |
| Greenlands | 32 | 9,462 | 3.38 |
| Church Hill | 27 | 7,991 | 3.38 |
| Omersley | 8 | 2,459 | 3.25 |
| Honeybourne And Pebworth | 9 | 2,844 | 3.16 |
| Lowes Hill | 9 | 2,854 | 3.15 |
| Gorse Hill | 18 | 5,764 | 3.12 |
| Evesham South | 16 | 5,429 | 2.95 |
| Foley Park And Hoobrook | 31 | 10,689 | 2.90 |
| Abbey | 19 | 6,719 | 2.83 |
| Nunnery | 23 | 8,193 | 2.81 |
| Droitwich South West | 14 | 4,994 | 2.80 |
| Batchley And Brockhill | 25 | 8,930 | 2.80 |
| Priory | 12 | 4,384 | 2.74 |
| Charford | 10 | 3,677 | 2.72 |
| Barnt Green And Hopwood | 8 | 2,951 | 2.71 |
| Rock Hill | 8 | 2,970 | 2.69 |

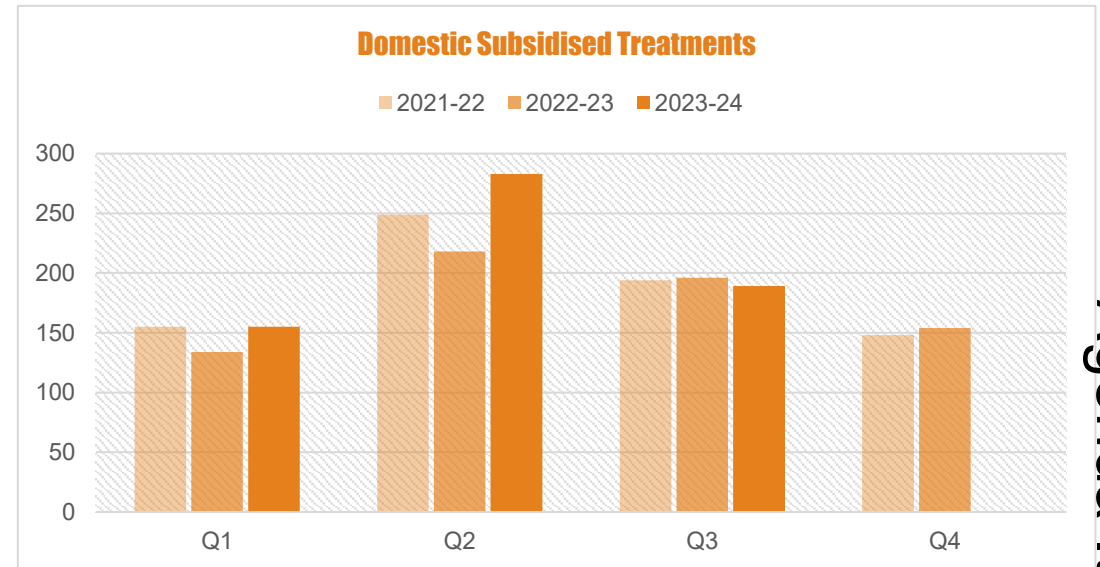
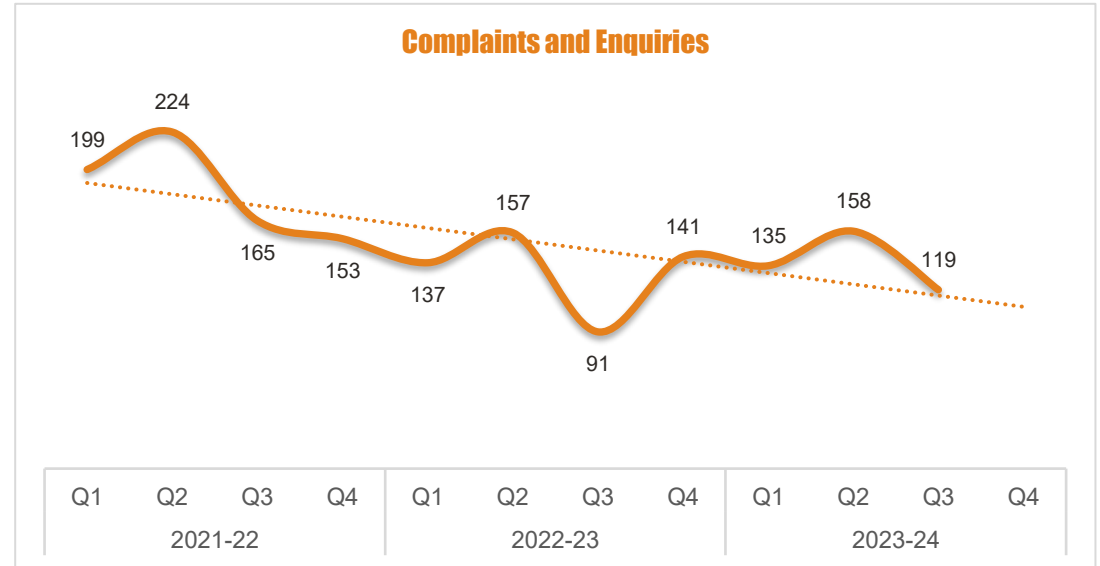
Public Health

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.

Comments

The number off public health cases recorded by WRS during the year to date is a reduction of 30% compared to 2021-22, but an increase of 7% compared to 2022-23. Approximately 60% of cases have related to pest control; such as enquiries about domestic treatments, enquires about sewer baiting, or complaints about pest control issues caused by the actions of neighbouring residents or businesses. A further 24% of cases have been complaints relating to accumulations at domestic properties which can also include pest control issues.

Of the 627 domestic treatments undertaken during the year to date, approximately 46% have been due to issues with rats, 26% have been due to issues with wasps, and 8% have been due to issues with bed bugs. Approxiamtely 64% of treatments have taken place at properties in the Redditch or Wychavon districts.



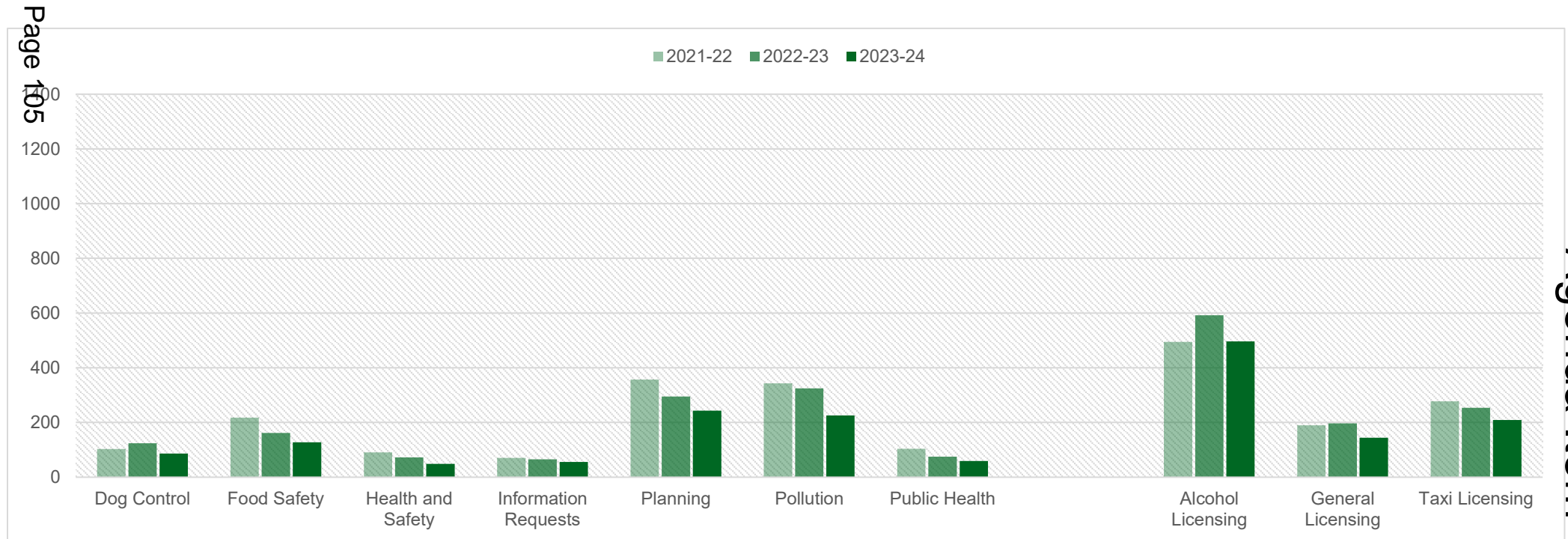
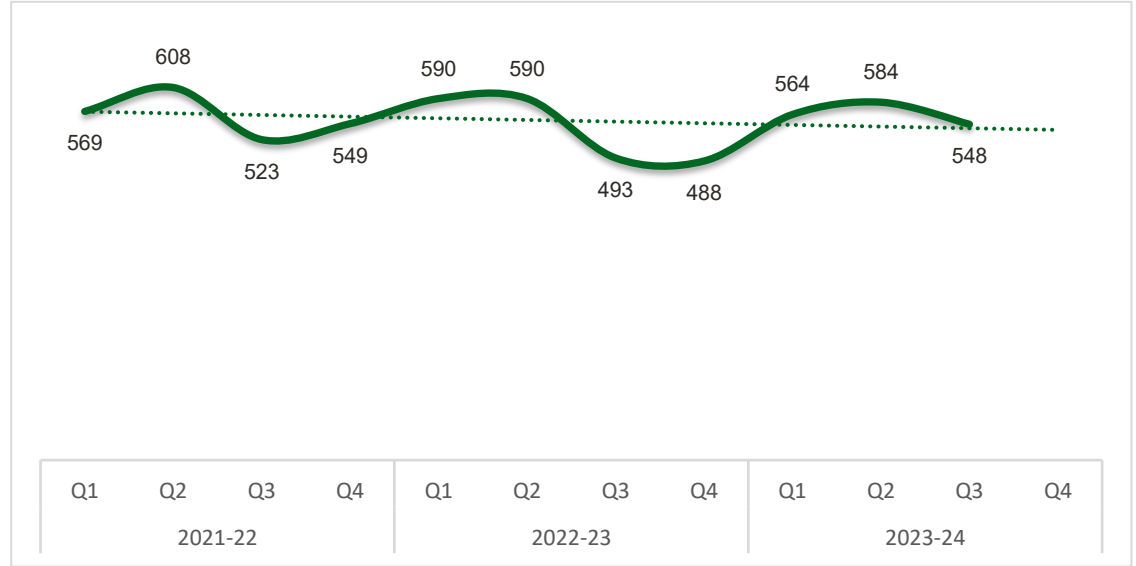
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Agenda Item 7

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.

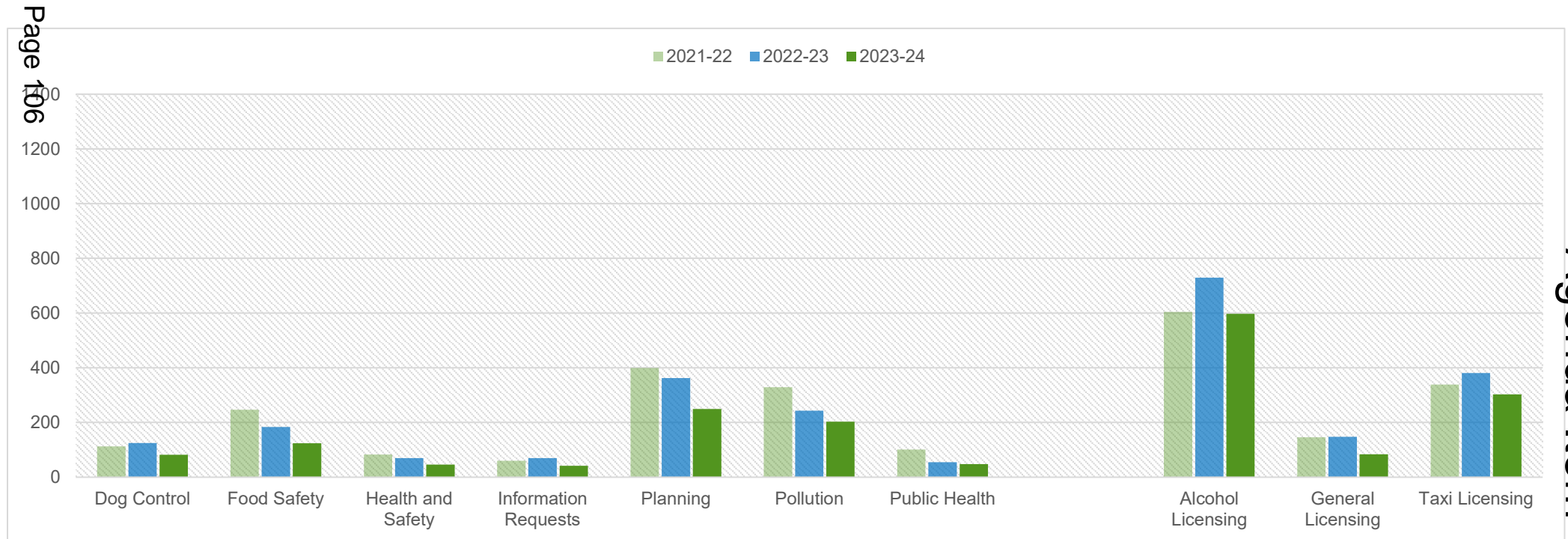
Note: The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS. The figures for the current year are cumulative and will continue to increase until the end of year report is published.



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.

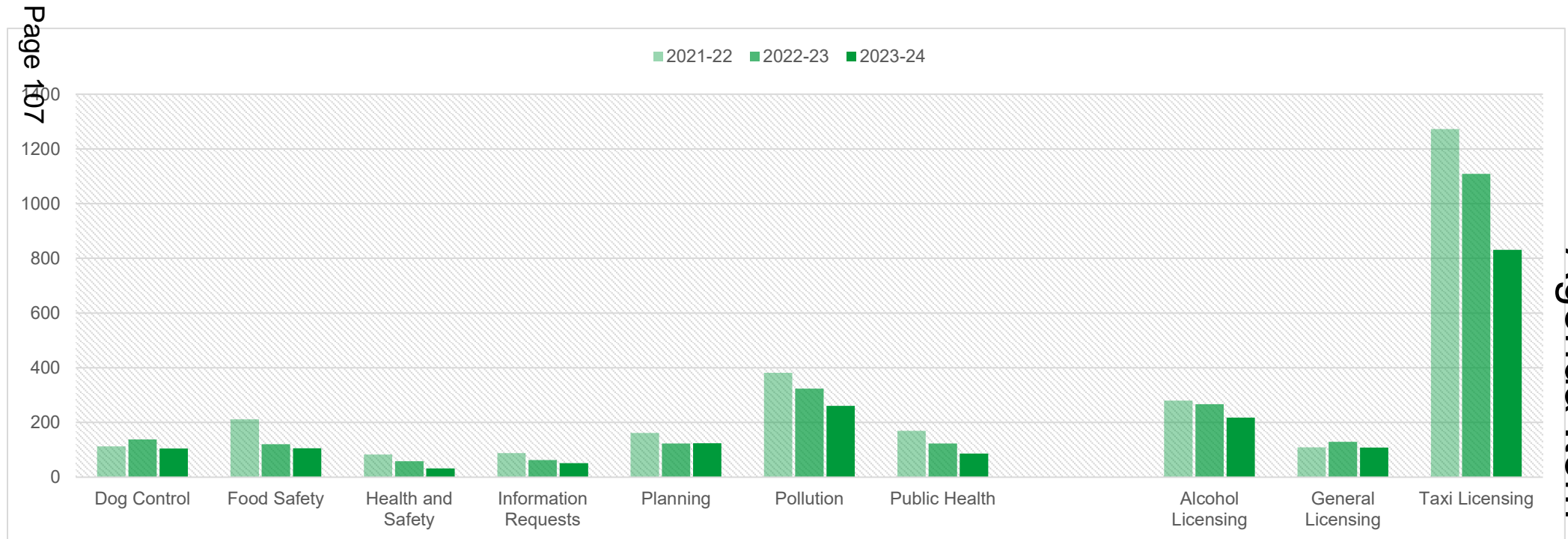
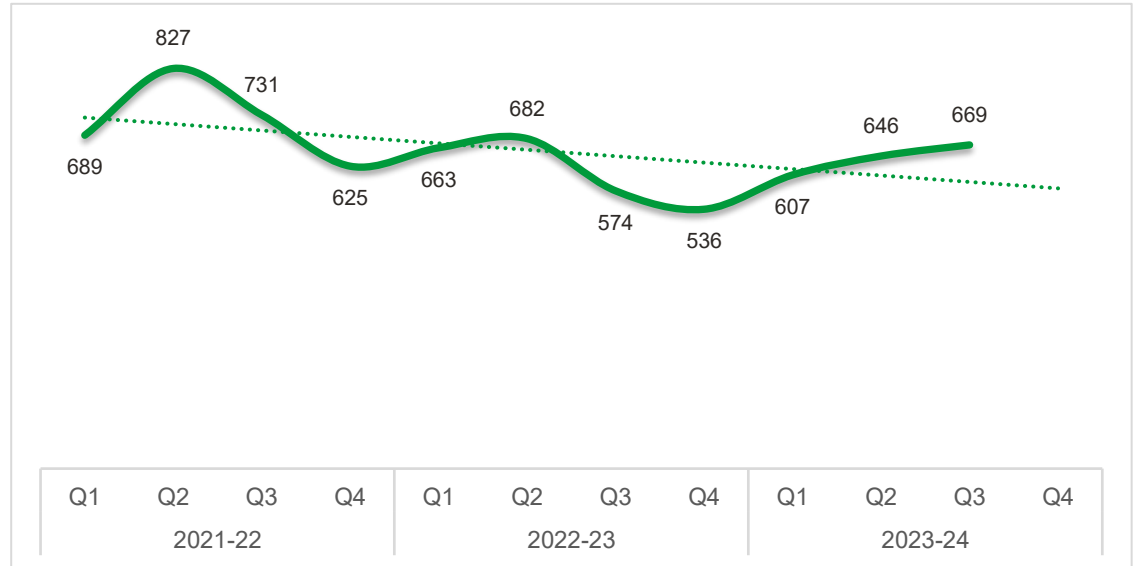
Note: The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS. The figures for the current year are cumulative and will continue to increase until the end of year report is published.



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.

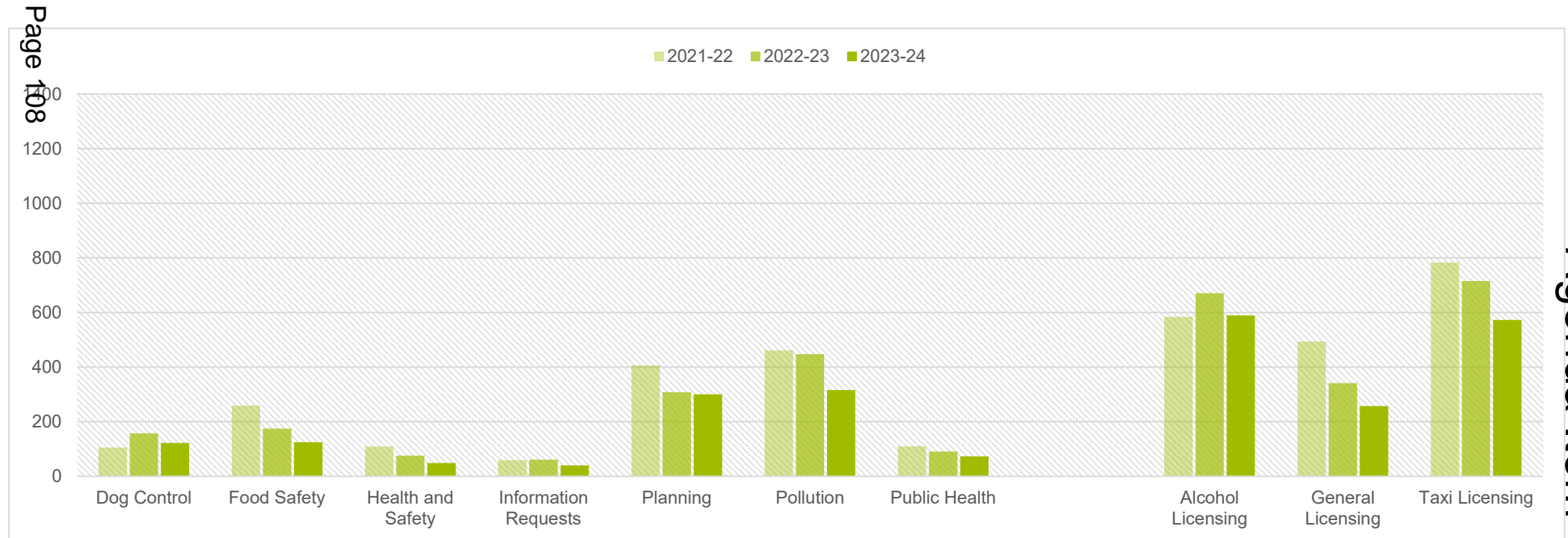
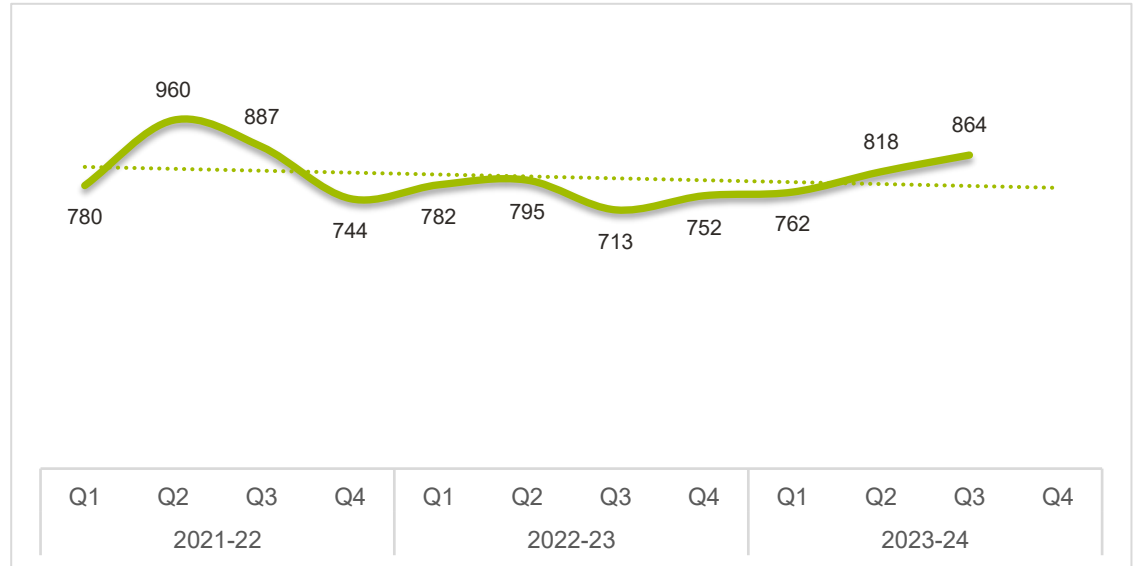
Note: The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS. The figures for the current year are cumulative and will continue to increase until the end of year report is published.



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.

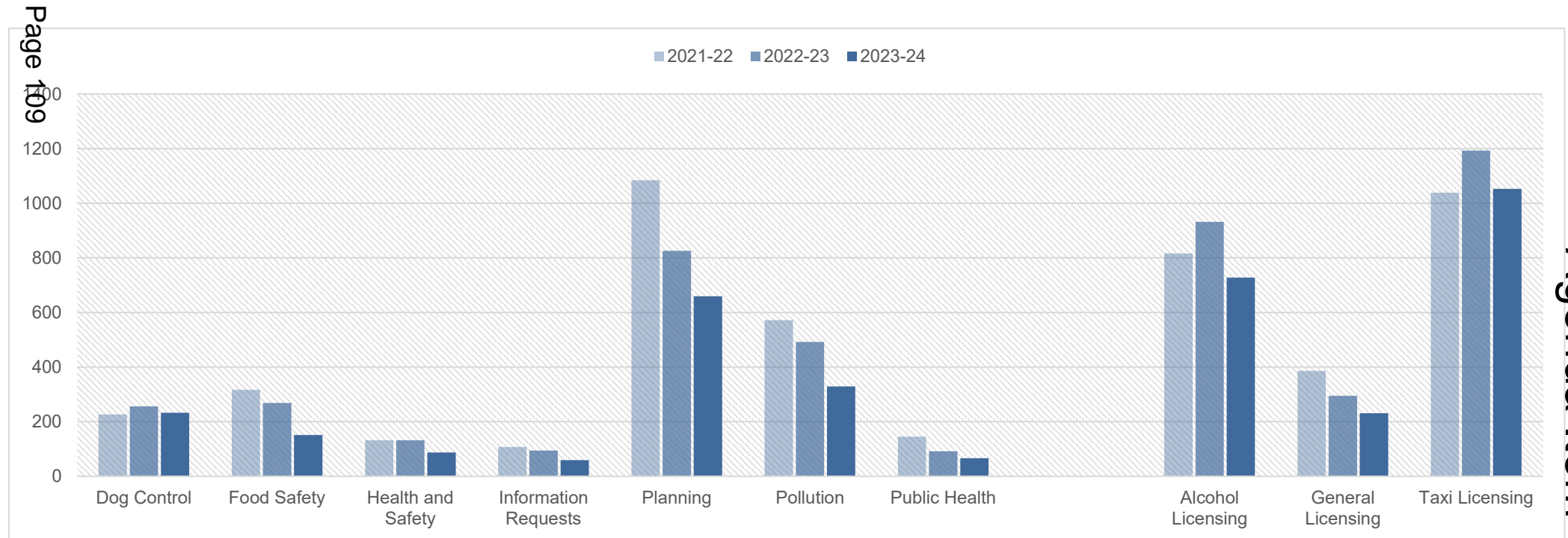
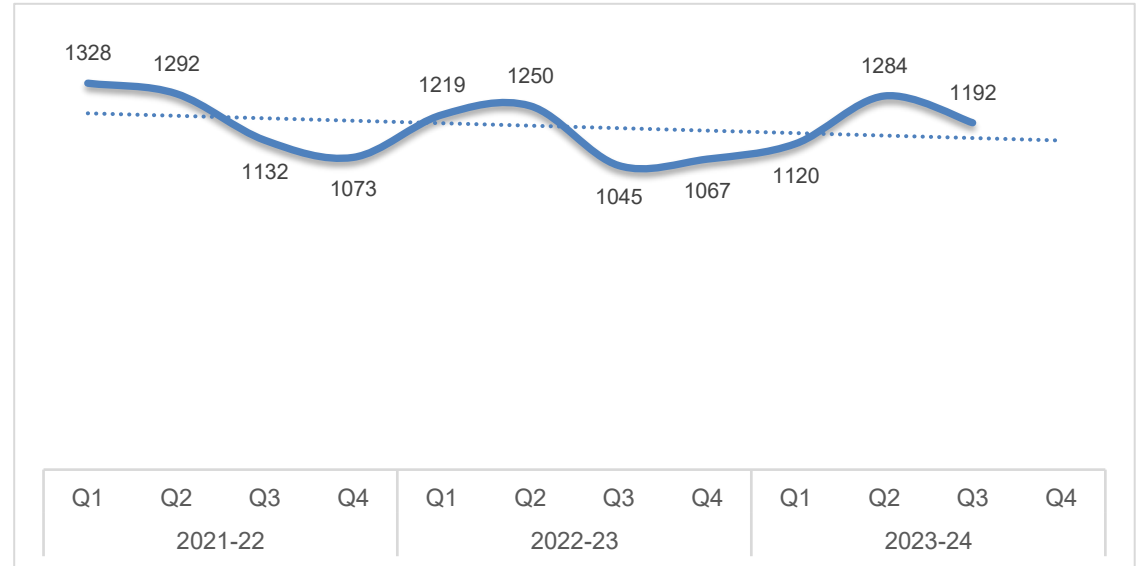
Note: The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS. The figures for the current year are cumulative and will continue to increase until the end of year report is published.



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.

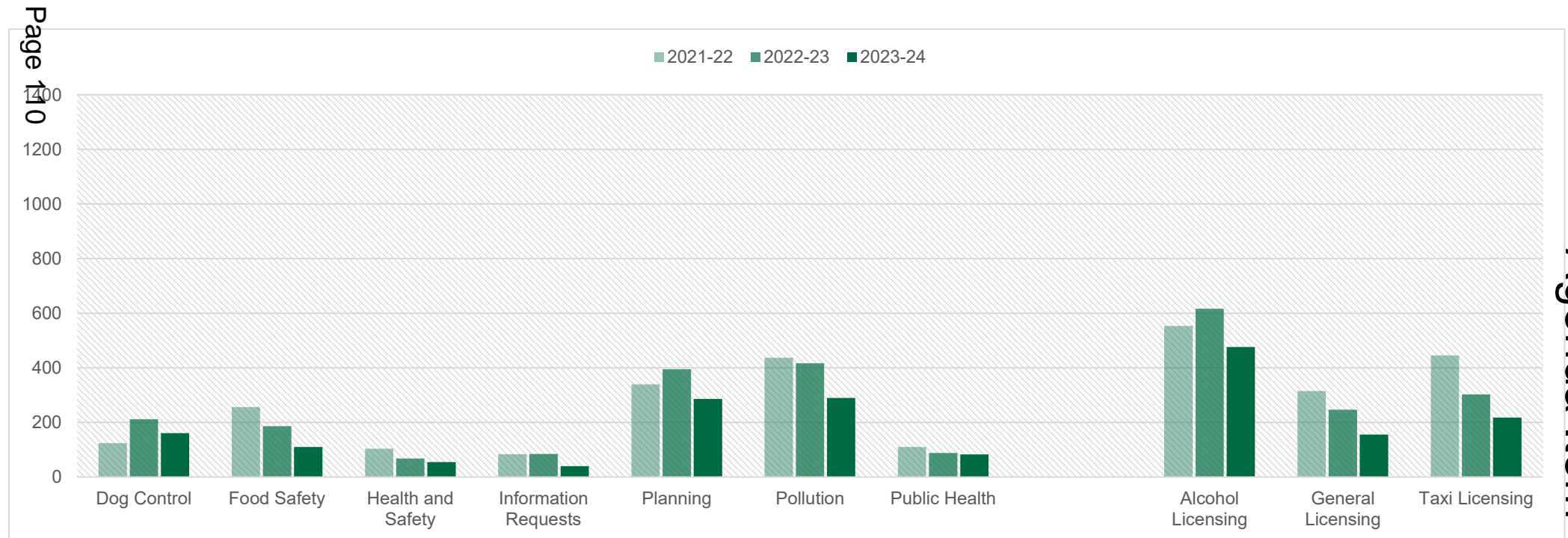
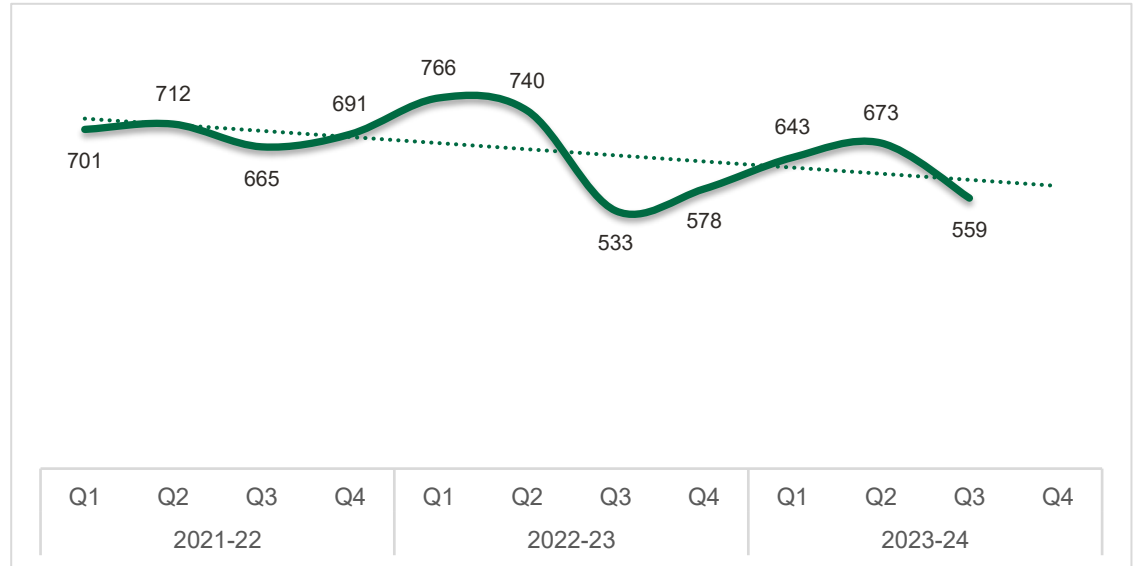
Note: The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS. The figures for the current year are cumulative and will continue to increase until the end of year report is published.



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 figures for the current year are cumulative and will continue to increase until the end of year report is published.



Cheltenham

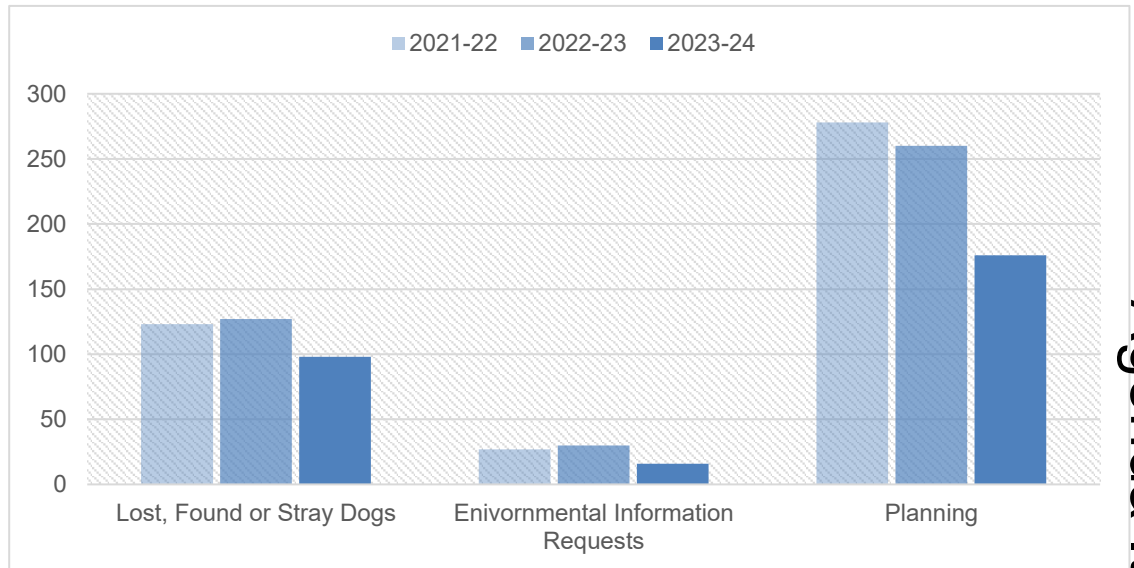
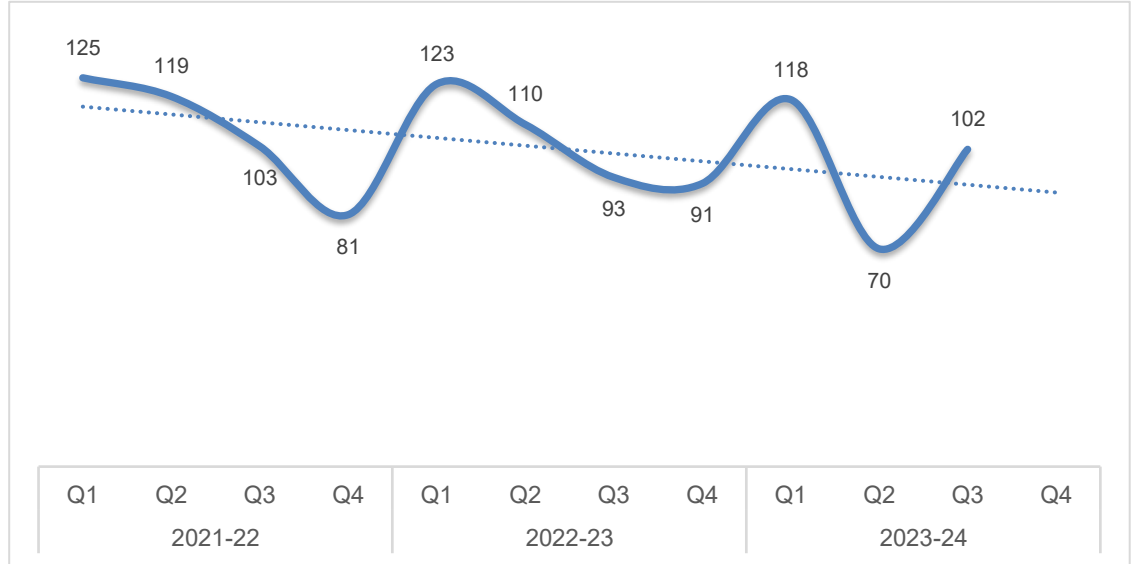
The dog control work undertaken for Cheltenham Borough Council is part of a contract with two other Gloucestershire authorities to deliver the collection, kennelling, returning of dogs to owners and rehoming of stray dog functions. The contract was recently renewed and has been highly successful in reducing stray dog numbers for Cheltenham Borough Council as well as utilising existing WRS resource and expertise. Having said that, post-pandemic stray dog numbers have been increasing year on year following the issues widely reported about dog socialisation and anxiety since as well as the current cost of living crisis.



Gloucester City

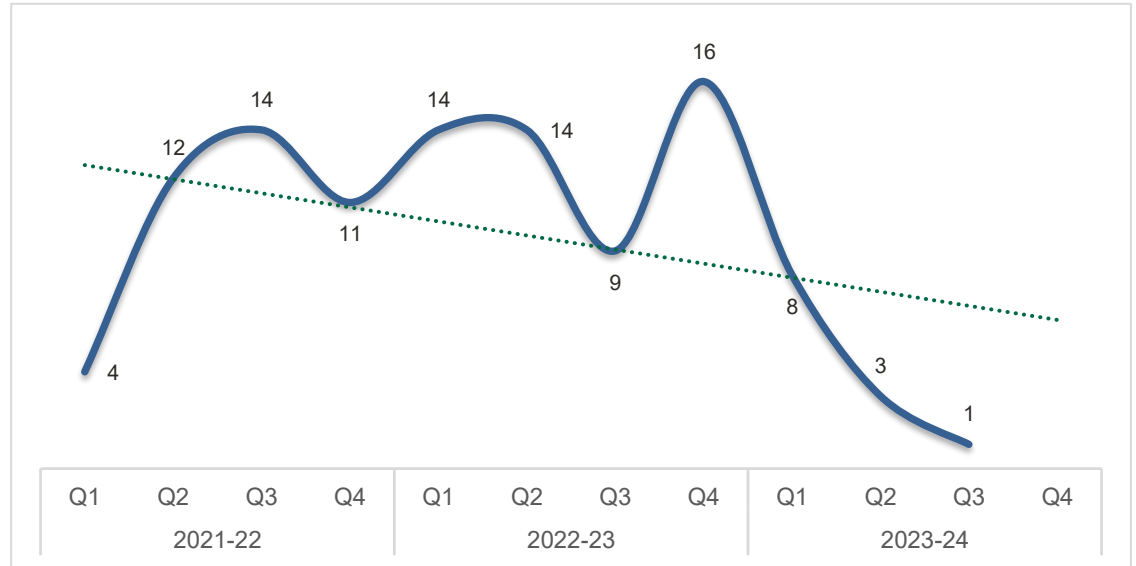
The dog control work undertaken for Gloucester City Council is part of a contract with two other Gloucestershire authorities to deliver the collection, kennelling, returning of dogs to owners and rehoming of stray dog functions. The contract was recently renewed and has been highly successful in reducing 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. The numbers of stray dogs are reducing annually, however, this is being closely monitored as the numbers are plateauing and there have been recent increases in the number of abandoned strays in other areas due to the cost of living crisis and post-COVID behaviour changes.

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



South Gloucestershire

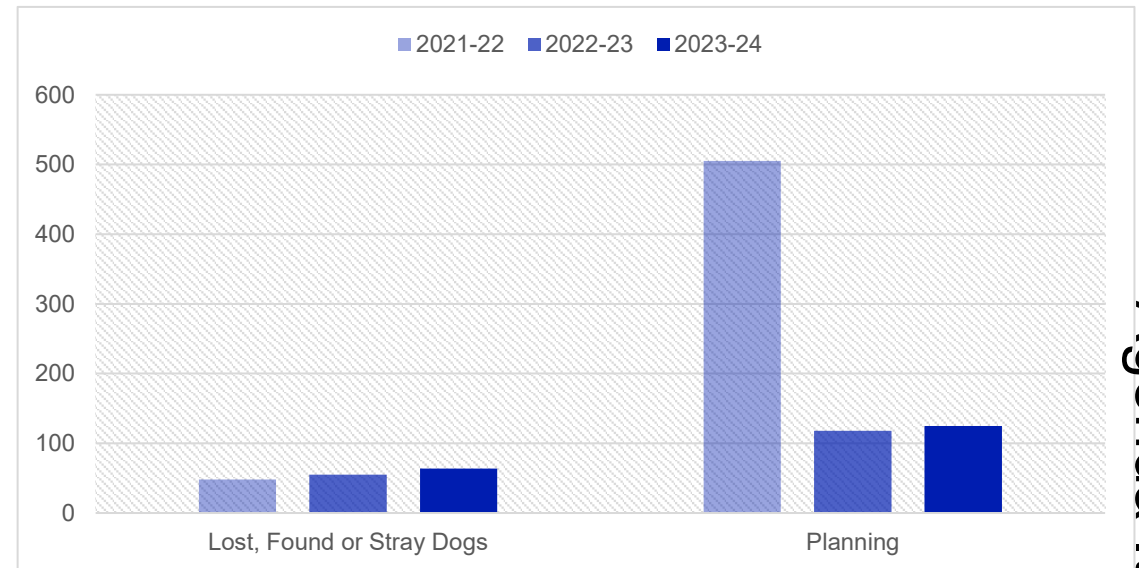
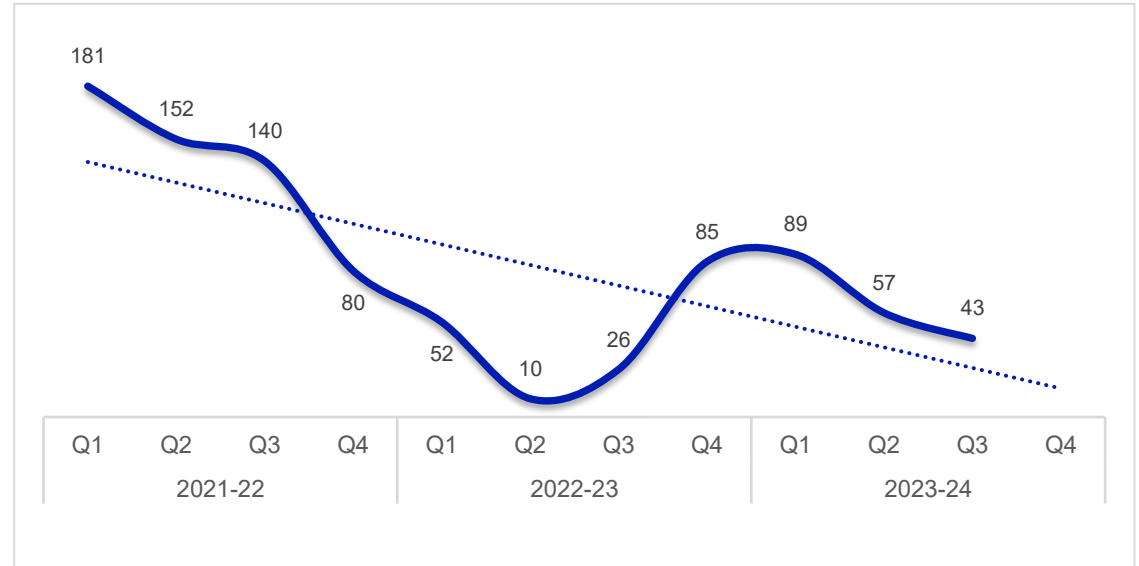
South Gloucestershire, being located on the outskirts of Bristol, was subject to significant contaminative industries and activities historically. Pressures on brownfield development recently have presented the authority with a large volume of planning applications on significantly contaminated and complex 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 in other areas due to the cost of living crisis and post-COVID behaviour changes.

In addition to dog control activity, the service continues to deal with planning enquiries and has recently been providing Private Water supplies sampling and managerial support to the Environmental Protection team at Tewkesbury.





WRS Board

Date: 29th February 2024

Progress Report on the Automation Project

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Recommendation | Members are asked to note the report. |
| Background | <p>In 2023, members agreed to create a reserve of £150,000 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. These would in turn upload directly into our IDOX Uniform back-office system making it easier for applicants to access our services and find out the status of their application.</p> <p>Officers agreed to provide a short progress report at each Board meeting until implementation.</p> |
| Report | <p>Progress</p> <p>Testing and evaluation of forms have continued, and officers are now content the TENs (Temporary Event Notice) form is ready to be rolled out. Officers have nearly fully exhausted second stage testing with just some planned stakeholder testing with members and the six Chairs of Licensing Committee arranged for the end of February/early March. Officers are confident any changes recommended at this stage will be minor amendments that should not delay the roll out.</p> <p>IT</p> <p>There has unfortunately been another delay by IDOX in implementing the connector, but officers have continued to use a workaround for testing. This implementation has now been scheduled for the end of February 2024 and will be in place prior to testing with councilors so end to end testing can be achieved.</p> <p>Finance</p> <p>The connector issue has not interfered with any of the financial testing and officers have a high level of confidence in the process, so members can be confident that monies are transferring correctly and to the correct district codes. This has now been in checked in both the 'test' and 'live' system.</p> |



Comms and Website Development

Officers are liaising with the communications lead to ensure the website and dashboard are easy to navigate alongside the 'help' guidance and FAQ's. These have been tested with external stakeholders and potential applicants and tweaks have been made where deemed necessary.

Phase Three

Officers have been checking the Licensing Act forms and Animal Licensing Forms with a view to put together similar guidance for applicants as the TENs form due to the positive feedback received. These will also now move into testing. A task and finish group has been set up consisting of officers across the different teams in WRS to scope out the 'Service Request' form. This form will enable applicants to send in enquiries to the service without having to email or telephone the duty officers and wait on the telephone. It is probably one of our more difficult jobs to scope as it needs to address a very wide range of potential requests relating to the work of all three WRS sections.

In parallel to the wider automation project officers continue to assess the roll out of electronic ID Cards in the taxi trade for both safeguarding and enforcement measures. IT colleagues at Wyre Forest have progressed with work on the dashboard implementation and await the implementation of the connector from IDOX to continue through to completion.

Contact Point

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