

# Public Document Pack

## WORCESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILS

### MEETING OF THE WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES BOARD

THURSDAY 20TH FEBRUARY 2025

AT 4.30 P.M.

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

MEMBERS: Councillor H. J. Jones, Bromsgrove District Council - Chairman  
Councillor K. Taylor, Bromsgrove District Council  
Councillor D. Harrison, Malvern Hills District Council  
Councillor C. Palmer, Malvern Hills District Council  
Councillor M. Stringfellow, Redditch Borough Council  
Councillor M. Dormer, Redditch Borough Council  
Councillor K. Holmes, Worcester City Council  
Councillor A. Scott, Worcester City Council  
Councillor R. Deller, Wychavon District Council  
Councillor M. Goodge, Wychavon District Council  
Councillor T. Onslow, Wyre Forest District Council - Vice-Chairman  
Councillor I. Hardiman, 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 21st November 2024 (Pages 5 - 20)
4. Worcestershire Regulatory Services Revenue Monitoring April - Dec 2024 (Pages 21 - 30)

5. Worcestershire Regulatory Services Service Plan 2025/6 (Pages 31 - 68)
6. Activity and Performance Data Quarter 3 2024/25 (Pages 69 - 110)
7. Progress Report on the Automation Project (Pages 111 - 112)
8. 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.

Sue Hanley  
Chief Executive

Parkside  
Market Street  
BROMSGROVE  
Worcestershire  
B61 8DA

12th February 2025

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

**Parkside, Market Street, Bromsgrove, B61 8DA  
Tel: 01527 881406**

**Email: [p.ross@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk](mailto:p.ross@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk)**

**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 21<sup>ST</sup> NOVEMBER 2024, AT 4.30 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors H. J. Jones (Chairman), D. Harrison, C. Palmer, M. Stringfellow, M. Dormer, K. Holmes, A. Scott, R. Deller, M. Goodge, T. Onslow (Vice-Chairman) and C. Rogers (substituting for Councillor I. Hardiman)

Officers: Mr P. Carpenter, Mr. S. Wilkes, Ms. N. Cummings, Ms. K. Lahel, Mr. M. Cox, Mr. D. Mellors, Ms. T. Ainscough (observing) and Mrs. P. Ross

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

21/24 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor K. Taylor, Bromsgrove District Council and Councillor I. Hardiman, Wyre Forest District Council, with Councillor C. Rogers in attendance as the substitute Member for Councillor I. Hardiman.

22/24 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

23/24 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board held on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2024 were submitted.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2024, be approved as a correct record.

24/24 **WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES REVENUE MONITORING APRIL - SEPT 2024**

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Resources, Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) and Redditch Borough Council (RBC), introduced the report and in doing so drew Members' attention to the

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Recommendations as detailed on pages 17 and 18 of the main agenda pack. The report covered the period April to September 2024.

Members were informed that the detailed revenue monitoring report, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report; showed a projected outturn 2024/25 of £5k surplus; and was based on the following assumptions: -

- A 3% pay award had been added to the projected outturn figures, as per the original budget. A final agreement for the 24-25 pay award of £1,209 per annum on all pay points below spinal points 43 had been received. The agreement was received after the completion of Quarter 2 revenue monitoring. Therefore, the impact would be reflected in Quarter 3 revenue monitoring.
- WRS had budgeted for a 3% pay award in 2024-25. The current pay award of £1,290 per annum on all pay points (pro rata for part time work) had now been accepted by employers and unions, the additional pressure on WRS salaries would be £21,405. WRS were unable to cover this increase, therefore an increase to partner funding would be required of:-

<b>Council</b>	<b>2024/25</b>
	<b>£'000</b>
Bromsgrove District Council	3
Malvern Hills District Council	3
Redditch Borough Council	4
Worcester City Council	3
Wychavon District Council	5
Wyre Forest District Council	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>

- If April to September 24 spend on pest control continued on the same trend for the rest of year, there would be an overspend on this service of £13k. 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	£7k
Wychavon District Council	£6k

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- The following were the actual bereavements costs April – September 24 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
Malvern Hills District Council	£4k
Redditch Borough Council	£6k
Worcester City Council	£1k

Other items for Members to note were: -

- £122k Ukrainian employees, offset to income on Appendix 1.
- £4.1 million salary budget on Appendix 1.

In response to a question raised on using reserves to meet any overspend, the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Resources explained that, although there was a small general reserve, it was not wise to use this for something that would be ongoing expenditure and it was better corrected now to reflect the costs of the partnership.

**RESOLVED** that the Board

1.1 note the final financial position for the period April – Sept 2024

1.2 partner councils are informed of their liabilities for Apr – Sept 24 in relation to Bereavements, as follows:-

<b>Council</b>	<b>Apr–Sept Actual Bereavements £000</b>	<b>24 for</b>
Bromsgrove District Council	3	
Malvern Hills District Council	4	
Redditch Borough Council	6	
Worcester City Council	1	
<b>Total</b>	14	

1.3 partner councils are informed of their liabilities for 2024-25 in relation to additional Technical Officers, as follows:-

<b>Council</b>	<b>Estimated Projected Outturn 2024/25 Envirocrime &amp; Planning</b>	<b>Estimated Projected Outturn 2024/25 Tech Officer</b>	<b>Estimated Projected Outturn 2024/25 Gull Control</b>

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	<b>Enforcement £000</b>	<b>Animal Activity £000</b>	<b>£000</b>
Bromsgrove District Council	304	9	
Malvern Hills District Council		7	
Redditch Borough Council	171	2	
Worcester City Council		3	35
Wychavon District Council		15	
Wyre Forest District Council		9	
<b>Total</b>	<b>475</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>35</b>

1.4 Approve the additional partner liabilities for 2024/25 in relation to the additional increase in pay award and recommend the increase to individual partner councils, as follows:-

<b>Council</b>	<b>£000</b>
Bromsgrove District Council	3
Malvern Hills District Council	3
Redditch Borough Council	4
Worcester City Council	3
Wychavon District Council	5
Wyre Forest District Council	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>

25/24

## **WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES BUDGETS 2025/26 - 2027/28**

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Resources, Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) and Redditch Borough Council (RBC), introduced a report detailing the draft Worcestershire Regulatory Service Budgets 2025/26 – 2027/28. Members’ attention was drawn to the



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Recommendations as detailed on pages 25 to 27 of the main agenda pack.

Members were informed that, Appendix 1 to the report showed the 2025/26 – 2027/28 budget breakdown for the district councils' partnership.

The following assumptions had been made in relation to the projections:-

- The enhanced pay award for 2024/25 had been accepted by employers and unions, the additional pressure on WRS salaries would be £21k. WRS were not able to fund this increase, therefore an increase in partner funding would be required.
- 3% pay award across all staff for 2025/26, 2% for 2026/27 & 2027/28. This would be subject to the National Pay Negotiations that were ongoing and therefore the final position would reflect any formally agreed increases, the budget also included any employee entitled to an incremental increase.
- Increase in Rent of £2.6k in 2025/26, a further 3% in 2026/2027 and 2027/2028.
- Increase in ICT Hosting of £2.6k, a further 3% in 2026/27 and 2027/28.
- Increase in Support Hosting of £3.8k in 2025-26, a further 3% in 2026/27 and 2027-28.
- Pension back-funding to be paid by all partners.

The unavoidable salary pressures were not able to be met by WRS generating additional income, therefore, an increase to partner funding would be required year on year, as detailed on page 28 of the main agenda pack. Salaries equated to 80% of the turnover so the higher pay award cost needed to be met.

Following the autumn budget, NI costs had increased from 13.8% to 15%, also the per-employee threshold at which employers become liable to pay NI reduced to £5k. This had created a pressure of £71k on the salary budget

It was understood that this increase in cost pressures would be covered for local authorities by way of additional new burdens funding, however, in the absence of clarity about how this would be delivered, officers would ask Members to approve the budget at this stage and would commit to bringing a further paper back to the Board at the meeting scheduled in February 2025, hopefully having received clarity on the Government's intentions of how that funding would be delivered.

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The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Resources mentioned the re-valuation of the pension fund, which happened every three-years and the potential this had for having further financial impact going forward. He suggested to the Board that, should Members so require, he would invite a representative from the Government Actuary's Department to a future meeting of the Board with regard to this as the shared service and staff were part of the Worcestershire Pension Fund.

In response to questions from Board Members on the rent, ICT hosting and support hosting, the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Resources explained that these increases were in-line with the RPI (Retail Price Index) for the current year. Therefore, the actual increase may change in April 25. For 2026/27 and 2027/28 a further 3% had been added to rent, ICT support & hosting support.

These pressures were not able to be met by WRS, therefore an increase to partner funding would be required, as follows:-

<b>Council</b>	<b>2025/26 Increase in Rent</b>	<b>2025/26 Increase in ICT Hosting</b>	<b>2025/26 Increase in Support Hosting</b>
	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>
Bromsgrove District Council	0.4	0.4	0.6
Malvern Hills District Council	0.4	0.3	0.5
Redditch Borough Council	0.5	0.5	0.7
Worcester City Council	0.4	0.4	0.6
Wychavon District Council	0.6	0.6	0.9
Wyre Forest District Council	0.4	0.4	0.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>3.9</b>

The Director of Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS), responded to a question on income generation targets and in doing so, highlighted that income generation was far better this year than the previous two years. The Technical Services team were a driving force in income generation. The Muller Primary Authority contract would generate income, and officers would look to build on the Primary Authority income stream. Officers were also looking to further promote the dog warden service to other authorities located within viable locations.

The Director of WRS responded to further questions on the setting of Fees and Charges, and in doing so explained that fees and charges were a reserved matter, being set by each partner authority. He

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explained that with some based on cost recovery only, no significant profit could not be made so WRS officers worked closely with their finance colleagues in the individual authorities to ensure that any increase in fees and charges was defensible so that authorities were not challenged or judicially reviewed. Furthermore, some other fees and charges were set by Central Government, and many had not changed in many years, despite local government representatives lobbying for this. WRS officers also worked together with finance officers to increase and align relevant fees and charges across the six partners where appropriate, being mindful of consistency where WRS was wholly responsible for the cost of any process e.g., stray dog fees were set across Worcestershire for economy of services.

Members expressed some concerns with regard to the increase of partner contributions and what could be done to avoid further increases in 2025/26.

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Resources and Director of WRS explained that WRS staff had received the same pay award as Government local authority employees. Officers would continue to scope income generation and look at economy of scale. Members were further informed that in 2010 WRS were asked to delivery 17% of savings of expenditure within the 3-year time scale of the WRS project, and that WRS had achieved 24%. During the following 3 years WRS had delivered differing levels of savings to all partners but in total reducing district partner costs by over £300,000. Between 2016/17 and 2020/21, WRS was asked to manage cost increases through income generation and received no additional funding in base budget through the period. WRS officers had a better grip on their financial costs and always tried to ensure a reasonable margin with any income taken on. The current increase was mainly due to salaries with the recently agreed pay award.

The Director of WRS commented that the quality-of-service individual partners received from WRS, was at a level that partners would struggle to deliver at the cost of their individual contributions. Therefore, there was significantly less spend by partner authorities than many similar local authorities and WRS delivered a good service. Members were reassured that officers continued and would continue to keep an eye ongoing cost.

## **RECOMMENDED that**

- 1.1 the 2025/26 gross expenditure budget of £5,356k as shown in Appendix 1, be approved;
- 1.2 the 2025/26 income budget of £1,258k as shown in Appendix 1, be approved;
- 1.3 the revenue budget and partner percentage allocations for 25/26 onwards, be approved, as follows:-

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<b>Council</b>	<b>£'000</b>	<b>Revised %</b>
Bromsgrove District Council	592	14.45
Malvern Hills District Council	538	13.13
Redditch Borough Council	725	17.68
Worcester City Council	658	16.07
Wychavon District Council	960	23.43
Wyre Forest District Council	625	15.24
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,098</b>	

1.4 the additional partner liabilities for 2025/26 in relation to unavoidable salary pressure, be approved as follows:-

<b>Council</b>	<b>2024/25 £'000</b>	<b>2025/26 £'000 Excluding NI increases</b>	<b>2025/26 £'000 NI increases</b>
Bromsgrove District Council	3	14	10
Malvern Hills District Council	3	12	9
Redditch Borough Council	4	17	13
Worcester City Council	3	15	11
Wychavon District Council	5	22	17
Wyre Forest District Council	3	14	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>71</b>

1.5 the additional partner liabilities for 2025/26 in relation to increase in hosting costs, be approved as follows:-

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<b>Council</b>	<b>Increase in Rent £000</b>	<b>Increase in ICT Hosting £000</b>	<b>Increase in Support Hosting £000</b>
Bromsgrove District Council	0.4	0.4	0.6
Malvern Hills District Council	0.4	0.3	0.5
Redditch Borough Council	0.5	0.5	0.7
Worcester City Council	0.4	0.4	0.6
Wychavon District Council	0.6	0.6	0.9
Wyre Forest District Council	0.4	0.4	0.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>3.9</b>

26/24

## **WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES - ACTIVITY AND PERFORMANCE DATA - QUARTER 2 2024/2025**

The Community Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager presented the Activity and Performance Data, Quarter 2 2024/2025 report, and in doing so the following key points were highlighted: -

### **Activity Data**

The second quarter of 2024/5 was yet another damp affair. This had impacted on at least one or two of our measures. Worcestershire continued to be a draw for outdoor activities with a range of events and festivals continuing to feature now we were beyond the pandemic, the crowds appeared to be returning, but it was clear that this was not to everyone's liking.

Some 891 proactive interventions at food businesses were undertaken during the year to date, with only 3% resulting in a business being rated as "non-compliant" (i.e., being issued a rating of 0, 1, or 2). A higher proportion of non-compliant ratings continued to be issued to the takeaway sector and small retailers.

The overall number of Licensing cases recorded between 1st April 2024 and 30th September 2024 represents an increase of 5% compared to 2022/23 and an increase of 6% compared to 2023/24. Applications had fallen slightly following the Q1 peak, probably reflecting that most businesses had tried to get their Temporary Event notices served well ahead of time.

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The number of Licensing enquiries, such as queries about regulations, by-laws, and licence conditions, invariably exceeded the number of actual Licensing complaints. Of the actual complaints received during the year to date, approximately 43% had related to taxi licensing, such as reports of poor driver behaviour, unauthorised parking, or poor driving standards, and 21% were related to alcohol licensing, usually indications that a business may be breaching the licensing objectives. A further 14% of complaints related to animal licensing with most cases relating to the unlicensed breeding and/or sale of dogs. Work remained on-going during the period in relation to the investigations relating to Operation Lisbon 2.

Planning enquiries continued to show an increasing number of cases, with volumes between 1st April 2024 and 30th September 2024 representing an increase of 26% compared to 2022/23 and 16% compared to 2023/24. Approximately 90% of enquiries had been consultations for air quality, contaminated land, and nuisance. Around 20% of enquiries continued to be processed, on a contractual basis, on behalf of other local authorities.

The overall trend on dog related complaints and enquiries remained slightly upwards, officers a significant increase in strays compared to Q1. Most of the cases had been reports of lost or stray dogs with most categorised as "contained strays," meaning dogs were found and held by members of the public. There had, however, been a notable increase in the number of dogs picked up with welfare concerns and subsequently requiring veterinary treatment or examination. Around 55% of dogs were successfully reunited with their owners, although this figure varied between district authorities. The number of dog control complaints remained low, with 42 complaints received during the year to date, 19 of which related to dogs which were persistently straying from residential properties and 12 related to dog fouling.

## **Performance**

Compliments continue to significantly outnumber complaints.

The overall rate of noise complaints against population was 0.67, lower than the figure at this point last year (0.79,) and well below the figures at Q2 in the most recent years (0.9, 1.08, 0.94 and 0.85, respectively.) This was again a good reflection of the poor weather over the Spring and Summer.

Income brought in during the first half of 2024/25 was £258,989, which was slightly higher than the previous two years (£204,718 and £232,520 respectively,) and significantly up on the 2-years before this. Using the historic budget figure for 2016/17 (£3,017,000) to maintain the comparison with previous years, this came out at 8.6% of that budget. Looking back at this point over recent years for comparison, the figures were 6.8%, 7.7%, 5.42%, 4.37%, 5.3% and 4.7% going back to 2018/19. The figure was approximately 5.7% of current revenue budget, so still healthy.

Members expressed some concern with regard to the notable increase in the number of dogs being picked up with welfare concerns and subsequently requiring veterinary treatment or examination. Members questioned if this was due to the deliberate abandonment of dogs that had been mistreated?

The Technical Services Manager, WRS explained that these dogs had not been deliberately abandoned due to mistreatment, but due to the cost of living increase and feeding their dogs or not being able to afford veterinary costs. Plus, with a lot of dogs purchased or homed during the pandemic, owners had not been able to socialise their dogs, and some dogs could have been purchased with underlying conditions. Also, dogs that had not been groomed properly which leads to dirty, matted fur, therefore making them more prone to fleas and ticks.

Following a question from the Board on the recruitment of the five new officers into the Community Environmental Health Teams, the Community Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager announced that all five positions had now been recruited into and that the new team members would receive the required training enabling them to be embedded into the team.

With the agreement of the Chairman, Councillor A. Scott, Worcester City Council referred to the new Business and Planning Act 2020, Pavement Licensing policy. Councillor Scott commented that Worcester City probably received the vast majority of Pavement Licensing Applications, and that the policy had recently been presented to a meeting of the Licensing Committee, whereby Members had suggested a number of amendments. Councillor Scott took the opportunity to invite Board Members to look at the suggested amendments made.

The Director of WRS highlighted that licensing was a reserved matter and therefore each partner authority may / could have a different Pavement Licensing policy tailored to their authorities' local needs and demographics.

**RESOLVED** that the Activity and Performance Data Quarter 2 2024/25, be noted and that Members use the contents of the report in their own reporting back to their respective partner authority.

27/24

## **PROGRESS REPORT ON THE AUTOMATION PROJECT**

The Licensing and Support Services Manager, Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) provided Members with an update on the Automation Project.

The Temporary Events Notice (TEN) form went live for 5 of the 6 districts in Worcestershire by close of play on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> September. Due to a planned internet update Worcester City Council had requested to wait until a week later to launch the form on their website.

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Members' attention was drawn to the figures in Table 1 and Table 2, on pages 79 and 80 of the main agenda pack. The tables showed the number of TENs received as of the 6<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

Overall, the shift to moving to online forms had been a huge success, duty officers had received a few queries and there were a few technical glitches.

Currently a total of 160 TEN forms had been received, so the vast majority of forms were now being received on-line. There had been a few challenges, including the requirement for the Uniform database system being switched off for routine back-up scheduling. This needed to be looked at and was being swiftly dealt with.

Members were further informed that the 'Next Steps' scheduling had changed since the last meeting of the Board, and that Personal Licence Application forms were due to be the next set of on-line forms being launched.

Following a query raised at the last meeting of the Board, Members were reassured that the on-line forms were accessible, this had now been confirmed by IDOX that the forms met the WCAG2.2 AA standards, Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).

Progress continued on the 'service request' form where the task and finish group had developed a series of questions for different scenarios received by all the teams across WRS.

It had proved to be quite a challenge to scope out by the teams involved as it had required the need to address a very wide range of potential requests relating to the work of all three WRS service areas. It had also required members across WRS teams to get together at various points of the scoping exercise.

Officers continued liaising with the communications leads to ensure district websites were easy to navigate alongside the 'help' guidance and FAQ's. These were tested with external stakeholders.

With regards to taxi ID cards, alongside the wider automation project, officers were working with MyTAG to implement the roll out of electronic ID Cards for the taxi trade for both safeguarding and nighttime enforcement measures. There had been some challenges with MyTAG but worked continued. IT colleagues at Wyre Forest had have progressed with work on the dashboard and SANDBOX requirement and were now working with SmartTag to enable remote access to the IDOX database. This would enable testing to commence and templates of the Taxi ID cards to be created.

In response to questions from Members, the Licensing and Support Services Manager, explained that officers were not at that stage yet to



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explain the MyTAG scheme to the taxi trade. Once this stage had been reached, officers would ensure that there was a communications plan in place for each partner authority, in order to explain MyTAG and fully engage with the taxi trade. Officers were scoping 'early adopters' and 'champions' for the scheme before rolling it out fully, there needed to be buy in from the trade. Officers had a good knowledge of each of the districts, which districts had taxi associations etc. and therefore communication plans would be bespoke for each district.

The Licensing and Support Services Manager and the Director of WRS responded to further questions with regards to Uber, the possibility of evolving a Worcestershire wide taxi booking system, the deregulation act and the taxi trade accepting the deregulation act and how young people used apps on their mobile phones to book taxis. The Director of Regulatory Services stated that, whilst officers understood the issues created, it would not be appropriate for WRS as the regulator to try to drive change in the market locally and that it was down to the taxi trade to make such changes.

The Director of WRS further emphasised that the roll out of the electronic taxi ID cards, alongside the wider automation project, was an incredibly positive step forward.

The Technical Services Manager, WRS, explained that, primarily on-line application forms were being delivered rather than written application forms being submitted to WRS. With regards to consultations and consultation responses received and service requirements of any complaints being received, e.g., noise from barking dogs, a smokey fire, he was working on such on-line forms. It was envisaged that the level of information included / required on these forms would enable people to be signposted to the relevant partner authorities' websites or to the 'next' stage of a complaint, whichever was relevant. By using these on-line forms, it would ensure that information was provided, and any relevant questions answered on the forms 'up front,' therefore reducing the amount of manual data inputting for duty officers.

As highlighted to Board Members at the last meeting of the Board, the Victoria forms project had taken precedent so some other work had stalled slightly but officers were working on what was required to ensure this element of the project could be delivered with in scope and to the required objectives.

In response to a further part of one question, it was explained that certain legislative conditions, such as the requirement to advertise in the press and display information on-site for any premises licence applications would continue, as this was a statutory requirement which had to be adhered to; as was the requirement for any representations received to such applications being brought to a Licensing Sub-Committee meeting for Member consideration and decision making.

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

28/24

## **AIR QUALITY BEHAVIOUR CHANGE PROJECT**

The Technical Services Manager, WRS presented a report on the Air Quality Behaviour Change Project, and in doing so, stated that he welcomed the opportunity to share, with Board Members, information on key initiatives and activities that aligned with WRS priorities and policies.

Members were informed that between 2018 and 2022, staff from WRS had engaged with Public Health at Worcestershire County Council (WCC) to mirror work done by other Local Authorities to fund and engage behaviour change work.

WRS had utilised external funding to develop a behaviour change project. A Behaviour Change Officer (BCO) was recruited in late February 2024 on a fixed term contract for 2.5 years. The aim of the project was to improve air quality through encouraging sustainable travel initiatives, particularly within schools and local businesses in specific locations. Key aims included reducing short car journeys by encouraging walking and cycling, raising awareness of air quality impacts, and encouraging community partnerships. The funding received was tied to certain areas. The specific target areas for the project included London Road, Worcester and the Lickey End M42 Junction, Bromsgrove

The report therefore sets out the work of the BCO to date and future work plans.

### **Key Activities and Achievements:**

The BCO's work could be classed into 4 workstreams, as detailed on pages 84 to 88 of the main agenda pack, and titled as follows:-

1. *Survey Insights.*
2. *School Engagement.*
3. *Community Outreach.*
4. *Promotional Materials.*

### **Survey Insights:**

#### **HoW College – WRS AQ Survey**

Since the main baseline survey failed to gather sufficient information from the younger end of the population, those aged between 16 and 30 years old; a new survey was conducted in September and October 2024 with the participation of the HoW College group, which involved all campuses, in Worcester, Malvern, Bromsgrove and Redditch. This survey was developed in-house, and the online survey reached 741

college students and staff, to assess transportation habits, awareness of air quality and barriers to sustainable commuting.

Respondents were mainly aged 16-30, with many living more than four miles from the relevant campus. Findings showed a reliance on cars, gaps in understanding of pollution sources, and identified personal and infrastructure barriers to low-emission travel options like walking or cycling. Further details of the results were detailed in Appendix 2 to the report. Key Information derived from the Surveys was further detailed on pages 85 and 86 of the main agenda pack.

## **School Engagement**

Survey data indicated that some focus was necessary on young people, with schools and colleges as potential venues for promoting air quality awareness. Hence, the BCO prioritised outreach to schools to foster engagement and identify participation opportunities.

A database was created with 264 schools as potential contact points across the County (242 state schools and 22 independent schools.) Between March and June 2024, 49 school visits were conducted, introducing the BCO role and promoting the AQ Worcestershire 2024 initiative.

From July to October 2024, emails were sent to schools to arrange meetings and explore potential air quality projects, resulting in 10 responses and collaborative meetings with schools in Worcester, Bromsgrove, Pershore, and Kidderminster, including the University of Worcester.

Following these efforts, 59 schools were contacted, achieving a significant milestone with six schools - including five schools and Heart of Worcestershire College (HoW)—committing to ongoing behaviour change projects and activities such as workshops and assemblies. Further details of these were included in Table 3 in Appendix 3, and Figure 1 on page 87 of the main agenda pack.

## **Community Engagement**

The BCO also established key partnerships with community groups, including Breathe Easy in Redditch and local care homes along London Road in Worcester. This had helped reveal gaps in community awareness regarding air quality issues and emphasised the need for targeted monitoring and education.

## **Future Work**

With funding until approximately September 2026, the BCO's work programme was expected to continue, as detailed on page 89n of the main agenda pack.

# Agenda Item 3

Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board  
21st November 2024

The Chairman took the opportunity to express sincere thanks to the BCO for the great work in engaging with young people.

Members also expressed their sincere thanks and complimented the work being carried out and agreed that all stakeholders needed to engage with initiatives and to tackle air quality. Members further commented that they had found the report informative and that they had not heard of all of the initiatives detailed in the report.

The Technical Services Manager therefore reiterated, that as recommended at the beginning of the report, that Members note the actions being taken by WRS officers and assist in enabling positive discussions to improve air quality in Worcestershire. The information needed to be shared with all Members of each partner authority.

With monitoring air quality (including particular matter) and the collection of all of the data gathered; officers' thoughts were to change or influence the behaviour of those at risk of adverse impacts from poor air quality, and to change the behaviour of those impacting on air quality. Also to encourage and promote positive initiatives.

Following on from a query with regards to the following statement on page 90 of the main agenda pack, which stated that 'It shortens lives', the Technical Services Manager briefly explained the statement, in that poor air quality was medically proven to shorten lives and this was factually correct. The Director of Regulatory Services indicated that officers understood this message might be stark and the way these things were communicated would be tailored to the audience to avoid unnecessary alarm.

**RESOLVED** that Members note the report and actions taken by WRS Staff and assist in enabling positive discussions to improve air quality in Worcestershire.

29/24

## **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Business on this occasion.

The meeting closed at 5.40 p.m.

Chairman



**WRS Board**  
**20<sup>th</sup> February 2025**

**WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES REVENUE MONITORING April – Dec 2024**

**Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Board:

- 1.1 Note the final financial position for the period April – Dec 2024
- 1.2 That partner councils are informed of their liabilities for Apr – Dec 24 in relation to Bereavements

<b>Council</b>	<b>Apr–Dec 24 Actual for Bereavements £000</b>
Bromsgrove District Council	5
Malvern Hills District Council	4
Redditch Borough Council	7
Worcester City Council	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>



# Agenda Item 4

1.3 That partner councils are informed of their liabilities for 2024-25 in relation to additional Technical Officers

<b>Council</b>	<b>Estimated Projected Outturn 2024/25 Envirocrime &amp; Planning Enforcement £000</b>	<b>Estimated Projected Outturn 2024/25 Tech Officer Animal Activity £000</b>	<b>Estimated Projected Outturn 2024/25 Gull Control £000</b>
Bromsgrove District Council	310	9	
Malvern Hills District Council		7	
Redditch Borough Council	174	2	
Worcester City Council		3	35
Wychavon District Council		15	
Wyre Forest District Council		9	
<b>Total</b>	<b>485</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>35</b>

1.4 Note that following the Government's guidance for reclaiming of National Insurance increases for 25-26 onwards, because these increases are linked to Revenue Outturn data forms, these increases are to be funded by partner councils as was outlined in the report approved at the meeting of the WRS Board on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2024, the financial summary of which is in the spreadsheet attached at Appendix 3.

## 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 2024. It also includes an update following Government issuing guidance on



how it would provide financial relief from the impact of the national Insurance increases on local authorities.

## Background

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

## Report

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

- Revenue Monitoring - April – Dec 24 – Appendix 1
- Income Breakdown - April – Dec 24 – Appendix 2
- WRS Partner Budget Contributions 2025/26 – 2027/28 – Appendix 3

### Revenue Monitoring

The detailed revenue report is attached at Appendix 1. This shows a projected outturn 2024/25 of £8k surplus. It is appreciated this is an estimation to the year-end based on following assumptions:

- The agreed pay award for 2024-25 is included in the revenue monitoring reports, the attached report also reflects the additional funding from partner councils of £21k agreed at Board in Nov 24.
- If April to Dec 24 spend on pest control continues on the same trend for the rest of year, there will be a overspend on this service of £19k. The projected outturn figure to be funded by partners is:-

Redditch Borough Council	£11k
Wychavon District Council	£8k

- The following is the actual bereavements costs Apr – Dec 24 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	£5k
Malvern Hills District council	£4k
Redditch Borough Council	£7k
Worcester City Council	£1k

This income is included in the income projected outturn.

- Appendix 2 shows the detail of the income achieved by WRS April – Dec 24
- Any grant funded expenditure is shown separate to the core service costs as this is not funded by the participating Councils.



# Agenda Item 4

- **National Insurance contributions 25-26 onwards**  
The Government have confirmed that National Insurance increases have been allocated and recompensed to councils based on revenue outturn data. The snip below, from guidance circulated on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2025 confirms this. Therefore, the allocations set out in the 2025-26 budget report discussed and approved on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2024 by the WRS Board are correct as the grant links financial reliefs to individual councils and not to Bromsgrove District Council as the host.

## **Employer National Insurance Contributions Grant – Explanatory Note**

### **Allocations methodology and timing**

Individual local authority allocations within the local government finance settlement have been determined based on the methodology below, noting in some instances we lacked the relevant, published RO data, and we have therefore used councils' self-submitted expenditure data for 2023-24 where there were gaps in the data for specific authorities.

- Appendix 3 shows the partner budget contribution breakdown 2025/26 – 2027/28, that was agreed at WRS Board on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2024

## **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 2024/25**

Total WRS Dec 24 / Period 9 - 24/25

	Revised Full Year Budget 24-25	Revised Budget - Committed Apr - Dec 24	Expenditure Apr - Dec 24	Variance	Qtr 3 Projected outturn	Qtr 3 Projected Outturn Variance	Comments
	£	£	£	£	£	£	
<b>Direct Expenditure</b>							
<b>Employees</b>							
Salary	4,179	3,134	2,786	-349	3,771	-408	Covered by income generation from Ukrainian & Planning Enforcement Work, covered by agency work - see line below
Agency Staff	0	0	405	405	553	553	Covered by income generation work, including work for other local authorities
Employee Insurance	21	15	9	-6	14	-6	
<b>Sub-Total - Employees</b>	<b>4,200</b>	<b>3,150</b>	<b>3,200</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>4,339</b>	<b>139</b>	
<b>Premises</b>							
Rent / Hire of Premise	79	59	58	-1	79	-0	
Cleaning	1	1	0	-0	0	-0	
Utilities	0	0	0	0	0	0	
<b>Sub-Total - Premises</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>-2</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>-1</b>	
<b>Transport</b>							
Vehicle Hire	13	9	2	-7	5	-7	
Vehicle Fuel	8	6	5	-1	8	0	
Road Fund Tax	1	1	1	-0	1	0	
Vehicle Insurance	5	4	4	0	5	0	
Vehicle Maintenance	3	2	1	-2	2	-2	
Car Allowances	62	47	36	-11	51	-12	
<b>Sub-Total - Transport</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>-20</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>-21</b>	
<b>Supplies and Services</b>							
Furniture & Equipment	44	33	36	3	60	16	Essential calibration on noise monitoring equipment. Purchase of food safety equipmet, due to increase in staffing.
Clothes / uniforms and laundry	2	1	2	0	3	1	
Printing & Photocopying	17	13	10	-3	13	-4	
Postage	11	8	12	3	13	2	
ICT	79	59	97	38	124	46	Includes Licence for Victoria Forms £32k, £7k for special equipment 50% funded by DWP, £3.5k included in income. £4k increase in Microsoft licences & £2k increase in Idox managed service
Telephones	40	30	19	-11	33	-7	
Training & Seminars	34	25	12	-13	24	-10	£8k released within Envirocrime & Planning Enforcement
Insurance	16	12	9	-2	12	-3	
Third Party Payments	203	152	152	-0	203	-0	
<b>Sub-Total - Supplies &amp; Service</b>	<b>445</b>	<b>334</b>	<b>349</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>485</b>	<b>39</b>	
<b>Contractors</b>							
Dog Warden	121	91	293	202	442	321	Additional contractors due to new contract, recovered in income
Pest Control	73	54	70	15	89	17	This is overspend within pest control, funded by Redditch & Wychavon and reflected in the income figure. Animal inspections now being done in-house, therefore using less contractors, these costs were recharged to businesses, therefore the saving will reflect in reduced income.
Taxi / Alcohol / & Other Licensing	72	54	22	-32	32	-40	
Other contractors/consultants	3	2	39	38	41	39	Includes Health & Safety work of £12k recovered from RBC & £25k recovered from BDC, this is offset in Income
Water Safety	5	4	4	1	6	1	
Food Safety	1	1	0	-1	0	-1	
Environmental Protection	12	9	22	13	26	14	Bereavements recovered in income
Grants / Subscriptions	13	9	11	1	15	2	
Advertising, Publicity and Promotion	6	4	2	-2	6	0	
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>304</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>463</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>657</b>	<b>353</b>	
<b>Income</b>							
Training Courses / Bereavement / Works in Default / Sewer Baiting etc	-1,001	-751	-1,107	-355	-1,520	-518	See append 2
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>-1,001</b>	<b>-751</b>	<b>-1,107</b>	<b>-355</b>	<b>-1,520</b>	<b>-518</b>	
<b>Overall Total</b>	<b>4,119</b>	<b>3,089</b>	<b>3,012</b>	<b>-77</b>	<b>4,111</b>	<b>-8</b>	

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## Worcestershire Regulatory Services Income 2024/25

Income from Partners	April to Dec 24
	£
Budget	3,089,273
Pension Backfunding	27,825
Bereavement / Public Burials	16,863
Pest Control - Wychavon & Redditch	14,185
Employee for Animal Activity	33,958
Employee for Additional Gull Work - Worcs City	29,830
Tameside - Subs to Anti Fraud Network - Worcs City	2,000
Technical Pollution Work - Worcs City	22,500
Contaminated Land Work - Worcs City	9,750
HSE Report - Redditch	12,930
Planning Enforcement - Bromsgrove & Redditch	326,829
Aqueduct Stables - Bromsgrove	24,876
Ukrainian Support Work - Bromsgrove & Redditch	88,030
	<b>3,698,849</b>
<b>Grant Income</b>	
Severn Trent - Sewer Baiting	10,986
OPCC - Stray Dogs	8,853
	<b>19,839</b>
<b>Other Income</b>	
Stray Dog Income	271,408
Worcester County - Mgmt, Legal, Admin & Uniform Support	57,352
County - Safety at Sport Grounds	16,500
Planning Support Work	45,182
Contaminated Land Work	31,225
PPC Work	6,628
Primary Authority work	15,000
Training / Risk Assessments of Water Supplies / Burials etc	7,882
Vet Fee Inspection Costs Recovered	9,216
Food Training Courses / Certificates / Food Hygiene Rating / Pre-Opening	16,733
	<b>477,126</b>
<b>Total Income Apr - Dec 24</b>	<b>4,195,814</b>
<b>2024/25 Base Budget from Partners</b>	<b>-3,089,273</b>
<b>Total Income Excluding Budget</b>	<b>1,106,541</b>

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Council	WRS Approved Budget 24-25	Tech Officer Animal Activity	Tech Officer Gull Control	Enforcement Officers	Envirocrime	25-26 Unavoidable Salary Pressures - Technical Officers NI Increases	Increase in Rent	Increase in ICT Support	Increase in Hosting Charges	24-25 Unavoidable Salary Pressures	25-26 Unavoidable Salary Pressures - Excluding NI Increases	25-26 Unavoidable Salary Pressures - NI Increases	Total Partner Contribution 25-26
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Bromsgrove District Council	592,164	10,268		254,348	52,448	6,627	387	374	557	3,093	13,550	10,268	944,084
Malvern Hills District Council	538,195	7,488				151	351	340	507	2,811	12,316	9,333	571,492
Redditch Borough Council	724,496	2,139		112,694	52,448	3,499	473	458	682	3,785	16,579	12,563	929,816
Worcester City Council	658,051	3,209	40,070			495	430	416	619	3,438	15,058	11,411	733,197
Wychavon District Council	960,198	14,762				297	627	607	904	5,016	21,972	16,650	1,021,032
Wyre Forest District Council	624,521	8,344				168	408	395	588	3,262	14,291	10,830	662,807
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,097,625</b>	<b>46,210</b>	<b>40,070</b>	<b>367,042</b>	<b>104,896</b>	<b>11,236</b>	<b>2,676</b>	<b>2,589</b>	<b>3,857</b>	<b>21,405</b>	<b>93,766</b>	<b>71,055</b>	<b>4,862,427</b>

Council	WRS Approved Budget 24-25	Tech Officer Animal Activity	Tech Officer Gull Control	Enforcement Officers	Envirocrime	25-26 Unavoidable Salary Pressures - Technical Officers NI Increases	Increase in Rent	Increase in ICT Support	Increase in Hosting Charges	24-25 Unavoidable Salary Pressures	25-26 Unavoidable Salary Pressures - Excluding NI Increases	25-26 Unavoidable Salary Pressures - NI Increases	26-27 Unavoidable Salary Pressures	Total Partner Contribution 26-27
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Bromsgrove District Council	592,164	10,482		262,363	54,101	6,627	730	706	1,132	3,093	13,550	10,268	13,287	968,502
Malvern Hills District Council	538,195	7,643				151	663	642	1,028	2,811	12,316	9,333	12,076	584,858
Redditch Borough Council	724,496	2,184		116,246	54,101	3,499	893	864	1,384	3,785	16,579	12,563	16,257	952,851
Worcester City Council	658,051	3,276	29,570			495	811	785	1,257	3,438	15,058	11,411	14,766	738,918
Wychavon District Council	960,198	15,068				297	1,183	1,145	1,835	5,016	21,972	16,650	21,545	1,044,909
Wyre Forest District Council	624,521	8,516				168	770	745	1,193	3,262	14,291	10,830	14,013	678,309
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,097,625</b>	<b>47,169</b>	<b>29,570</b>	<b>378,609</b>	<b>108,202</b>	<b>11,236</b>	<b>5,049</b>	<b>4,886</b>	<b>7,830</b>	<b>21,405</b>	<b>93,766</b>	<b>71,055</b>	<b>91,944</b>	<b>4,968,346</b>

Council	WRS Approved Budget 24-25	Tech Officer Animal Activity	Tech Officer Gull Control	Enforcement Officers	Envirocrime	25-26 Unavoidable Salary Pressures - Technical Officers NI Increases	Increase in Rent	Increase in ICT Support	Increase in Hosting Charges	24-25 Unavoidable Salary Pressures	25-26 Unavoidable Salary Pressures - Excluding NI Increases	25-26 Unavoidable Salary Pressures - NI Increases	26-27 Unavoidable Salary Pressures	27-28 Unavoidable Salary Pressures	Total Partner Contribution 27-28
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Bromsgrove District Council	592,164	10,699		270,596	55,799	6,627	1,083	1,048	1,723	3,093	13,550	10,268	13,287	12,795	992,731
Malvern Hills District Council	538,195	7,801				151	984	952	1,566	2,811	12,316	9,333	12,076	11,629	597,814
Redditch Borough Council	724,496	2,229		119,893	55,799	3,499	1,325	1,282	2,108	3,785	16,579	12,563	16,257	15,654	975,469
Worcester City Council	658,051	3,343	29,570			495	1,204	1,165	1,915	3,438	15,058	11,411	14,766	14,218	754,632
Wychavon District Council	960,198	15,380				297	1,756	1,699	2,794	5,016	21,972	16,650	21,545	20,747	1,068,064
Wyre Forest District Council	624,521	8,693				168	1,142	1,105	1,817	3,262	14,291	10,830	14,013	13,494	693,337
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,097,625</b>	<b>48,145</b>	<b>29,570</b>	<b>390,489</b>	<b>111,598</b>	<b>11,236</b>	<b>7,494</b>	<b>7,252</b>	<b>11,922</b>	<b>21,405</b>	<b>93,766</b>	<b>71,055</b>	<b>91,944</b>	<b>88,537</b>	<b>5,082,038</b>

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## WRS Board

Date: 20<sup>th</sup> February 2025

### Worcestershire Regulatory Services Service Plan 2025/6

#### 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 in recent years 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 that has been refreshed for the coming 3-years. This piece of work reviews the full data and intelligence picture, looks at emerging threats. The assessment recommends retaining our cross-cutting priorities but rolling more work into these:

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

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

Again, a range of high-level activities against the 3 tactical priorities are identified within the plan so that members will be aware of the general focus

# Agenda Item 5

of the workload. Below this will sit several plans, either team based or cross cutting that will be used to drive the actual business activities.

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

The Government's announcement of a devolution model for England involving the removal of two-tier arrangements in favour of unitary local government across England introduces a further factor to be considered. Whatever the shape this takes going forward, WRS stands ready to contribute to the conversation whilst continuing to do its best by the local authority partners.

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 managed to build on our client-base post pandemic with new clients for dog-related support, and we hope we will be able to identify new ones, although over time this will get harder especially as the devolution/ Unitary agenda gains momentum. We do however remain hopeful that this strategy will remain fruitful in the immediate future.

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 2017 audit by the Food Standards Agency who were keen that members have a better understanding of the demand in this service area when they authorised the plan going forward.

By the time this plan is implemented in April, all the new staff recruited using last year's funding uplift will be trained to a reasonable level and contributing fully, so the figures for visits will reflect the additional capacity made available to the service to deliver the increase in lower risk visits and review of new/ changed premises or businesses. 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 patterns which has yielded efficiencies but our reliance on ICT provision to deliver this does increase our vulnerability to disruption.



# Agenda Item 5

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 given they are most likely of the central bodies to intervene with local authorities. We have also added a line for the potential risk from the impact of the devolution process and the move to unitary local government, although It is not expected to create any issues in the period for which the service plan will be valid.

## **Financial Implications**

None

## **Sustainability**

NA

## **Contact Points**

Simon Wilkes  
Tel No: 01562-738088  
Email Address: [simon.wilkes@worcsregservices.gov.uk](mailto:simon.wilkes@worcsregservices.gov.uk)

## **Background Papers**

Service Plan 2020/21 including Risk Register



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# Service Plan 2025/26

# 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 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. It provides a high-level picture of what activities the service will carry out to achieve or address those priorities, and how success will be measured. The Service will enter 2025/26 with a total agreed budget from partners of just under £4.863M. The budget 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. Following the clarification that the increased Employers National Insurance contributions are to be supplied to individual partners not to the staffing host, these are also included in the figures. The total does not include the amount for Bromsgrove and Redditch for their Enviro-crime and Planning Enforcement functions as this is being treated separately for now to avoid any impacts on broader partnership contribution calculations.

Plans for 2025/26 are based on the recently revised Strategic Assessment for the service, which identifies several cross-cutting priorities. These feature several areas that create the most issues for partners. Addressing these via relevant control strategies is how we now work under the Intelligence Operating Model, allowing all relevant elements of the service to focus on problem solving and working with partners, including the Trading Standards team to address them. Uncertainty remains with world events including on-going issues in Ukraine and the Middle East. The change of incumbent in the US may play a part in world events, with impacts both nationally and internationally remaining uncertain. Government's indication of changes to local authority funding, with a one-year then three-year settlement, plus the devolution agenda and the proposals for wide-scale local government reorganisation, make this a difficult period to predict for the sector. Although the overall financial settlement offered is an improvement, it mainly benefits those with social care responsibilities and won't cure all ills. Pressures will remain, including the risk of further section 114 announcements. Thankfully, so far this has not been a necessary consideration for the authorities here.

Although the financial and structural uncertainties 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 legally required of local councils may look more attractive for those with difficult financial positions. Local Government re-organisation will have some impact on this, but it will also impact this service, so we will proceed but with caution. 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 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 fifteenth 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 2025/26, 2026/27, and 2027/28 however the operational detail reflects the planned activities that the service will undertake in 2025/26.

2024/25 has been another very busy year for WRS. 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 several serious accidents to investigate, including some involving fatalities, along with reviews and re-writes of Air Quality action plans, the successful bid to DEFRA for real-time Air Quality monitoring equipment, plus the need to identify places to install this. Licensing moved on from policy around taxis and the deployment of the revised national standards into local policies to presenting alcohol and other policies for review and re-adoption.

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Work from our usual local authority customers continued and we won new contracts, particularly involving the dog control functions. 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. The big feather in our collective cap this year was Muller Dairies, closely followed by another national business, Timpsons. We hope to build the close working relationships necessary to make a success of this during the coming 12 months.

Government's announcement of the phasing out of 2-tier local government will change the council landscape in Worcestershire. The County Council's Cabinet has indicated its preference is to pursue a unitary Worcestershire model, which would meet the Devolution White Paper's indicated minimum half-million population footprint. There have been concerns expressed by some district members and alternative options have been suggested. The County Council's request to be included in a fast-track process was turned down, so May 2025's elections will go ahead, but they still seem keen to put in a high-level plan in time for the 21<sup>st</sup> March as required by Government. We await further developments, but it seems clear that Government will legislate for the change it feels is appropriate should local authorities disagree on a way forward. We have yet to see what form of combined authority any new Worcestershire arrangement would feed into. Whatever happens, it will not be occurring in the next 12-months, the period covered by this plan, so whilst it provides a backdrop, normal service delivery needs to continue.

Legal process again featured in the work of the service during 2024/5 with several cases coming to fruition, which will be reported in the Annual Report that will come to the Board in June 2025.

The Food Standards Agency continues to explore different ways of potentially delivering food controls and to push against the reductions in capacity by local authorities. They remain insistent that authorities align their activities more closely to the Food Law Enforcement Code of Practice. The appointment of 5 additional staff, which partners agreed to fund going forward from April 2024 has gone some way to addressing their demands, but we will see how this develops in the coming years, particularly as re-organisation will feature for many Environmental Health services. Giving certain sectors like the large supermarkets more autonomy and lower inspection burdens was floated as an option during 2024, but this must be seen as part of a broader modernisation programme that the Agency will be developing in the coming years that will include revisions to the Food Hygiene Code to compliment what they have already done with the one for Food Standards work, which is delivered in Worcestershire by the County Council's Trading Standards team. The Agency remains insistent that there will be a role for local enforcement, but there are no signs that their approach will fully embrace the intelligence-led approach. The Agency's role as the national body tasked with ensuring the food law regime operates so as to give confidence to countries receiving exported UK products will remain a dominant factor influencing its approach to operations.

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

- On-going engagement with the Food Standards Agency in relation to activities, and working towards delivering their expectations,
- The continued delivery of our programmes of work to tackle cross cutting issues,
- 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 the WRS operational roster like planning enforcement, enviro-crime and others,
- 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 of 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. The revised rolling agreement for the management of the Trading Standards service and the continued delivery of the Safety at Sportsgrounds function means we will continue the service's engagement with the County Council. Feedback remains positive on all aspects of this relationship.



The website continues to improve post-rebuild on an updated software platform, and on-going automation project will continue to increase its functionality for 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. If all our work supports one or more of the above outcomes, we know we are delivering what partners want.

Our Strategic Assessment, the key document that helps us determine priorities has been reviewed during 2024/5 and a new version created for the 3 years from April 2025/6. It looks at a broad swathe of local, regional, and national data to help identify the key issues to be tackled over the period, and the Intelligence Unit will do an annual sense check to ensure the environment has not changed significantly. Analysis for this purpose focussed on the functions which generated a higher level of complaints and notifications and/or a higher level of proactive activity. This led to multiple analytical assessments and the recommendation for three tactical priorities to be adopted by the service for the period of the assessment's validity. These are outlined below:

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

The night-time economy is carried forward from the last assessment. It is a cross-cutting aspect for the service, requiring input from several WRS teams. Pubs, clubs, restaurants, and takeaways were all prominent within the analysis of alcohol licensing for the non-payment of annual fees. They also feature in food safety with respect to alleged poor hygiene standards and practices, and whilst domestic nuisance is more prominent, these premises feature strongly in the figures for allegations of nuisance from non-domestic outlets. Allegations of pest infestations also feature from time to time in urban centres and associated with activities in the Night-Time Economy. 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. The use of these services has continued to grow, and these newer methods of trading continue to adapt, including the development of businesses with single kitchens offering multiple brands offers, which create their own issues from a regulatory perspective.

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

The sale and ownership of dogs also remains a cross-cutting priority and, as with Night-Time Economy, issues are referenced within several parts of the analytical assessment. In the main, stray dogs are found to be in good condition but only around half are reunited with their owners, and increasing numbers appear to have some welfare issues or are found to need veterinary examination or treatment. A significant proportion of dogs are either not microchipped or, the details held on the microchip have not been updated, making identifying owners very difficult in many cases. In addition, noise from barking dogs is one of the most prominent alleged statutory nuisances. There is also the on-going issue of the unlicensed trade in dogs brought to light by Operations Lisbon 1 and 2, that will require revisiting.

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

Again, this cross-cutting issue is highlighted in several parts of the assessment and can be derived from various areas of more traditional Environmental health work. Whilst domestic nuisance activity is significantly influenced by dog ownership, noise from audio-visual equipment remains a significant cause for allegations of statutory nuisance, as does the difficult to address issue of smoke caused by the burning of garden waste or from wood-burning appliances. Health and safety at work offences were more prominent in non-food businesses, and this has been what the Community Environmental Health unit's investigative work has focused on in recent years. Broader work on Air Quality also fits within this priority and the service has taken strides forward with this during the period of the last assessment, with reviews of strategy and action plans and the development of real-time monitoring capacity. Towards the end of the last assessment period, capacity was taken on to help support work on influencing behaviours of both those at risk of impact from adverse air quality but also reducing overall contributions to pollutants. Food safety work in premises not linked to the Night-Time Economy sits nicely in here with the prevention of food-borne illness through good hygiene standards protecting the health of our communities. Small retail food outlets were relatively prominent within the analysis of food safety, and more likely to be issued with 0, 1, or 2 food hygiene ratings than larger outlets. In certain areas these businesses are also known to be potentially connected to Trading Standards offences. Whilst larger food businesses, including manufacturers, importers and distributors tend to be a lesser threat from a food hygiene perspective, they are of interest to Trading Standards and may be caught by other regulatory aspects like Environmental Permitting. The case last year that related to a pollution incident at a timber treatment business demonstrates why this last function is also included in this priority area.

Although only undertaken for 2 partners, enviro-crime (illegal waste disposal,) will be a significant area of work for the dedicated team covering this, and it fits nicely into this priority. Between June and December, some 2000 incidents were reported to the service for illegal waste disposal/fly-tipping for two districts alone. It is likely that district colleagues dealing with this issue elsewhere in the county will be facing proportionately similar workloads. Unlicensed scrap metal collection, covered for all six partners, may also feature in this priority area.

In previous plans we have had additional priorities around supporting commercial and industrial businesses to operate safely and responsibly to encompass some business-as-usual activities but, these do fit well into the other three priorities, so we have left these out this year. However, WRS will continue to investigate complaints, provide advice, and conduct routine interventions across its functions.

The three 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 maintained or improved environmental standards.

Government has indicated its intention to have a 1-year financial settlement for 2025/6, followed by a 3-year budget settlement for 2026/7 onwards. Whilst the overall Council financial settlements for 2025/6 are slightly better than anticipated, much of the uplift has been focused on higher tier functions and district finance colleagues across the partners tell us, in the main that they will be faced with a challenging but manageable financial situation for next year. Whilst the County Council's recent financial statements are concerning, it is hoped that the situation will not adversely impact the work done on its behalf in managing Trading Standards functions, discharging petroleum licensing requirements and delivering safety at sportsgrounds functions, all of which are statutory duties upon the authority.

In the past, from a WRS perspective, financial challenges have been 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 the previous 2-years, it is difficult to find any further meaningful savings from these functions. The intervention of the Food Standards Agency and the pressure applied to increase capacity only re-enforces this. We will continue to encourage partners to consider what other enforcement related functions they might wish to operate under the WRS banner, where economies of scale might be created to assist with delivery and potentially reduce costs in the longer term. If the financial situation deteriorates significantly and all partners need to reduce their financial commitments, there will need to be agreement across the partners as to where reductions in service delivery might fall.

The service will continue to 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 addresses 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.

### **3. FINANCE**

A summary of the budget position for 2025/6 is shown at Appendix B. More detailed breakdowns of financial activity will be available to the Joint Board in its regular financial reports.

### **4. AUDIT AND SCRUTINY ARRANGEMENTS**

The internal audit shared service has continued to provide support to the automation project to ensure proportionate oversight for the project given the spend. No other areas of WRS activity were audited in 2024/5. The shared audit service has always been viewed by WRS managers as a helpful critical friend and if they find resource in 2025/6 to look at any other aspects of activity, they will be welcomed with this approach in mind.

Page 44 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.

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 several 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. At times, the sheer demand for nuisance and other complaint work has simply outstripped capacity to address it, so customers were less happy with how long it took us to 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 potential nuisance problem. Public expectation of what the law can deliver also continues to be an issue, particularly in relation to noise in more rural areas. The law does not legislate to provide people with silence, which can lead to conflicts with those looking to diversify activities in the rural environment and the subjective nature of the decision as to whether something constitutes a statutory nuisance is equally galling to many. The fact that there is no red line beyond which something is deemed a nuisance is something people find difficult to accept in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but unless Government looks to amend these mid-20<sup>th</sup> century legal provisions, local authorities can do little to address this. We will continue to try to better understand the issues customers present and look to improve performance during the coming year.

The need to continue to deliver food interventions to meet the increasing expectations of the Food Standards Agency may exacerbate pressures on nuisance work, 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. The additional resources recruited during 2024/5 will have completed their training by April 2025, so we should see a greater number of lower-risk food interventions, which is the issue the FSA wanted us to address.

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

<p>3</p> <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 47</p>	<p><b>Promoting safe, clean and healthy communities</b></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>Support Businesses to become economically successful and compliant with the law (Pollution, H&amp;S, Food Safety, Licensing) through risk based/ intelligence-led interventions. Ensure that nuisance and other pollution related issues are appropriately tackled.</p> <p>Respond to complaints and take appropriate action.</p> <p>Provide relevant advice and information, available through a range of channels.</p> <p>Maintain preparedness for response to emergencies, including disease outbreaks.</p> <p>Protect the environment and the public through monitoring air quality and ensuring that contaminated land is suitable for development.</p> <p>Monitor Air quality and respond to contaminated land issues.</p> <p>Supporting the planning system</p> <p>Provide businesses with advice and assistance.</p> <p>Ensure business controls of environmental emissions are in place leading to reduced environmental damage and better health</p> <p>Facilitate Consumers in being able to make informed choices on where to eat or purchase food through published food hygiene ratings.</p> <p>Respond to disease notifications and outbreaks.</p>	<p>% food businesses broadly compliant at first visit/ inspection</p> <p>% of food businesses scoring 0,1,2* as at 1<sup>st</sup> April each year</p> <p>% of service requests where resolution is achieved to customers satisfaction.</p> <p>Delivery of the annual air quality reporting duties.</p> <p>Rate of noise complaint per 1000 head of population.</p> <p>% permitted businesses broadly compliant at first visit/ inspection</p> <p>Disease response plans maintained, reviewed and updated on a regular basis.</p>
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4	<b>Addressing Corporate issues</b>	<p>Respond to complaints and take appropriate action, building our ability to resolve issues or re-direct callers on their first contact with us.</p> <p>Maintain a register of compliments and complaints with actions taken.</p> <p>Maintain links with county-wide TCG &amp; take part in partner exercises to test plans, as appropriate.</p>	<p>% of service requests where resolution is achieved to customers satisfaction</p> <p>% of service requests where resolution is achieved to business satisfaction</p> <p>Business Continuity plans are maintained, reviewed and updated on a regular basis</p>
5	<b>Supporting staff to perform well</b>	<p>Ensure necessary training is identified and delivered.</p> <p>Undertake annual staff survey.</p> <p>Undertake annual staff performance reviews with regular feedback sessions from supervisors and managers.</p>	<p>Staff sickness and absence at public sector national average or better</p> <p>% of staff who enjoy working for WRS</p>

**5A: FOOD SERVICE DELIVERY**

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We include a specific section on the Food delivery plan to meet the requirements of the Agency and the Code. A pre-pandemic audit led to a recommendation that we provide members with a more detailed brief on food work for the coming year.

Whilst we will move to delivery of food interventions more focused on the Code of Practice, 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 specific type of food premise.

Recruitment to all new food posts was completed by September 2024. All have learned quickly and are now making a positive contribution to the food programme. Credit goes to the WRS Food Lead for organising the training process to get us to this position. Time recording estimates indicate that 10-12 FTE are now committed annually to Food Hygiene work (6-9 FTE last year,) with an average quoted to the Agency of 11 FTE. This may increase during the financial year as the 5FTE new posts will be contributing during 2025/6.

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. Figures for 2025/6 are in bold. Last year's figures are retained in italics for comparison.



<b>Element of Food plan</b>	<b>Visits that we will aim to complete</b>
<p><i>Estimated number of Food Hygiene visits scheduled for 2024/5 (based on the Food Hygiene rating system.)</i></p> <p><b>Estimated number of Food Hygiene visits scheduled for 2025/6 (based on the Food Hygiene rating system.)</b></p>	<p><i>1971 of which approximately 105 will be in the higher risk categories and the remainder in categories C and D</i></p> <p><b>1762: The FSA have now directed through our engagement that they consider Categories A-C and most D rated premises to require a site visit.</b></p> <p><b>Hence across all categories A-D of which approximately 101 will be in the highest A-B risk categories with 435 Cs and 688 Ds. Category Es will continue to follow a mix of inspection and alternative enforcement approach, subject to Food Lead assessment. This comprises 538 E rated premises.</b></p>
<p><i>Estimated number of premises scheduled for alternative approaches to inspection during 2024/25</i></p> <p><b>Estimated number of premises scheduled for alternative approaches to inspection during 2025/26</b></p>	<p><i>500</i></p> <p><b>250 E rated premises</b></p>
<p><i>Estimated number of new registrations/ unrated premises that will require inspection during 2024/25</i></p> <p><b>Estimated number of new registrations/ unrated premises that will require inspection during 2025/26</b></p>	<p><i>800, of which about one-third will be low risk and can be dealt with initially by questionnaires</i></p> <p><b>800, of which about one-third will be low risk and can be dealt with initially by questionnaires. This number appears to be relatively stable now, with this number of new registrations, a mix of people taking over existing outlets or wholly new operations.</b></p>
<p><i>Estimated number of overdue premises assessed as requiring a visit during 2024/25</i></p> <p><b>Estimated number of overdue premises assessed as requiring a visit during 2024/25</b></p>	<p><i>790 from previous years plus those previously identified on the system that would otherwise have been picked up during 2022/23</i></p> <p><b>150 high risk from previous years (Apr 24-Mar 25)</b></p> <p><b>450 other premises remain outstanding from previous years. The vast majority of these are very low risk together with anomalies that remain from legacy data systems and require data cleansing. These will all require an audit check to establish their status.</b></p>

These figures should give members a reasonable picture of the volume of pro-active food hygiene related activity that should take place during 2025/6.

## 6. PERFORMANCE REPORTING

Performance against outcomes will be reported to the WRS Board, quarterly, six-monthly, or annually, depending on the individual measure. The IT platform allows the Intelligence Unit to collection and analyse data which is both accurate and robust and recent improvements in data extraction have increased the frequency with which several measures can be reported by the team. The service's ability to provide activity data has continued to improve as the benefits of the IT platform have been implemented. Use of time recording to give a better understanding of how much it costs to undertake specific activities is continuing to be refined. Members participated in a session in October 2019 with 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 division provides Food Hygiene, Health and Safety at Work, Public Health and Nuisance functions using three teams. Currently, the 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. The team has decided to continue with this approach, adding the new food officers to the three teams so they will be dedicated to delivering food work from within our multi-functional teams. The legal support role continues to sit in this team as most of the casework emanates from here.
- 2) The Technical Services division provides all environmental health support around planning matters, delivers IPPC inspection, Air Quality and Contaminated Land regime work, manages the pest control contracts, and directly delivers the Dog Wardens service. The internal IT support and system management roles also sit here due to the complex technical nature of the work and the in-house first-contact team of Duty Officers is also part of this team. The team also delivers much of the income generation work for other local authorities as well as the Planning and Enviro-crime enforcement and Homes for Ukraine work for two of our partner authorities.
- 3) The Licensing and Support Services division delivers all WRS licensing administration and licensing enforcement, along with the wider in-house clerical/ administrative support that is required.

The arrangement of 3 Team Managers and the Head of Service/ Service Director has successfully provided the necessary management cover and support in recent years, as well as promoting income generation in many areas of the service, 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 Service/ Service Director have been providing management support to the Trading Standards team. The review of arrangements with County Council Public Health colleagues during 2024/5 led to the integration of the content of 3 previous agreements into one document, and there is now a rolling agreement in place for the partnership to supervise and support the Trading Standards function. The Service Director continues to act as informant for criminal cases and retains the position as authoriser of surveillance activities under Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000, where he has significant experience and understanding. The agreement also appoints the Director to the statutory role of Chief Inspector of Weights and Measures for the County Council, to meet its obligations under section 72 of the Weights and Measures Act 1985. The support of management across the Trading Standard functions by WRS provides additional benefits with cross team working and knowledge, especially in areas of income generation and business support, to the benefit of both WRS partners and the County Council. This led to the Technical Services 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.

## **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.

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.

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 the animal licensing regime introduced in 2018 latterly included a formal qualification requirement. Broadening officer experience will help to ensure that no officer only has experience of just a single local licensing regime. Discussions will take place about the longer-term internal structure of the Licensing team, which members will be made aware of in due course.

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 preceding 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.

Cyber security is the major consideration currently with several high-profile attacks on local authorities that have caused chaos for the delivery of services and have resulted in the complete 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. Moving to holding important documents needed on a day-to-day basis to cloud storage will help to ensure continuity but loss of systems in recent incidents still suggest that temporarily we may need to return to full paper recording for a period before digital resource can be restored!

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

Despite Trading Standards returning to direct County Council control, Community Environmental Health staff and the Trading Standards and Animal Health staff continue to work closely together to ensure that, in event of an emergency or capacity shortage, officers can support each other when necessary. Having the teams managed by the same Manager on a day-to-day basis, together under one roof and in one office space will continue to allow both teams to utilise 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. The continued co-location of WRS teams with County Council Trading Standards and Animal Health officers at Wyre Forest House ensures strong links between both groups of staff. This is particularly relevant for the Intelligence posts that are split between the two organisations. Now that Trading Standards is part of the Public Health Directorate, 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. Maintaining contacts with Economic Development colleagues at both County and District level helps ensure that we are providing relevant support to legitimate businesses and to participate in projects where regulatory involvement may be required.

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

- West Mercia Police & West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner
- The Environment Agency
- The Health and Safety Executive
- UKHSA

- Local Partnership bodies e.g., Community Safety Partnerships, Safer Communities Board, Health and Well-being Board
- Adult and Children Safeguarding Boards
- Hereford & Worcester Fire & Rescue Service
- County Council Public Health team
- Regional Regulatory Partnerships and National Bodies (ACEHO Group, CECEHO Group, CIEH, OPSS/ PARG, MJAC, NCLOG, CEtTSA, 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, scams and intellectual property work, and builds on the work of licensing colleagues in relation to addressing CSE. The service has seats at both tactical and operational multi-agency groups that address organised crime.

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## **11. CONSULTATION & ENGAGEMENT**

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 aim to provide Member Newsletters covering the various activities that the service undertakes across the County. We will try to make this information specific to districts where it is relevant, to reassure members that our activities are seeking to protect everyone and support businesses across the whole of Worcestershire, but a proportion will be generic and relevant county-wide, matching the way in which regulatory functions have changed over the years. People seldom limit their economic activities within the boundaries of a district. It is hoped that the Activity Data reports that will continue to be delivered to the WRS Board will provide elected members on the Board with sufficient information to also feedback to the wider membership in their respective authorities.

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.

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 the 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.

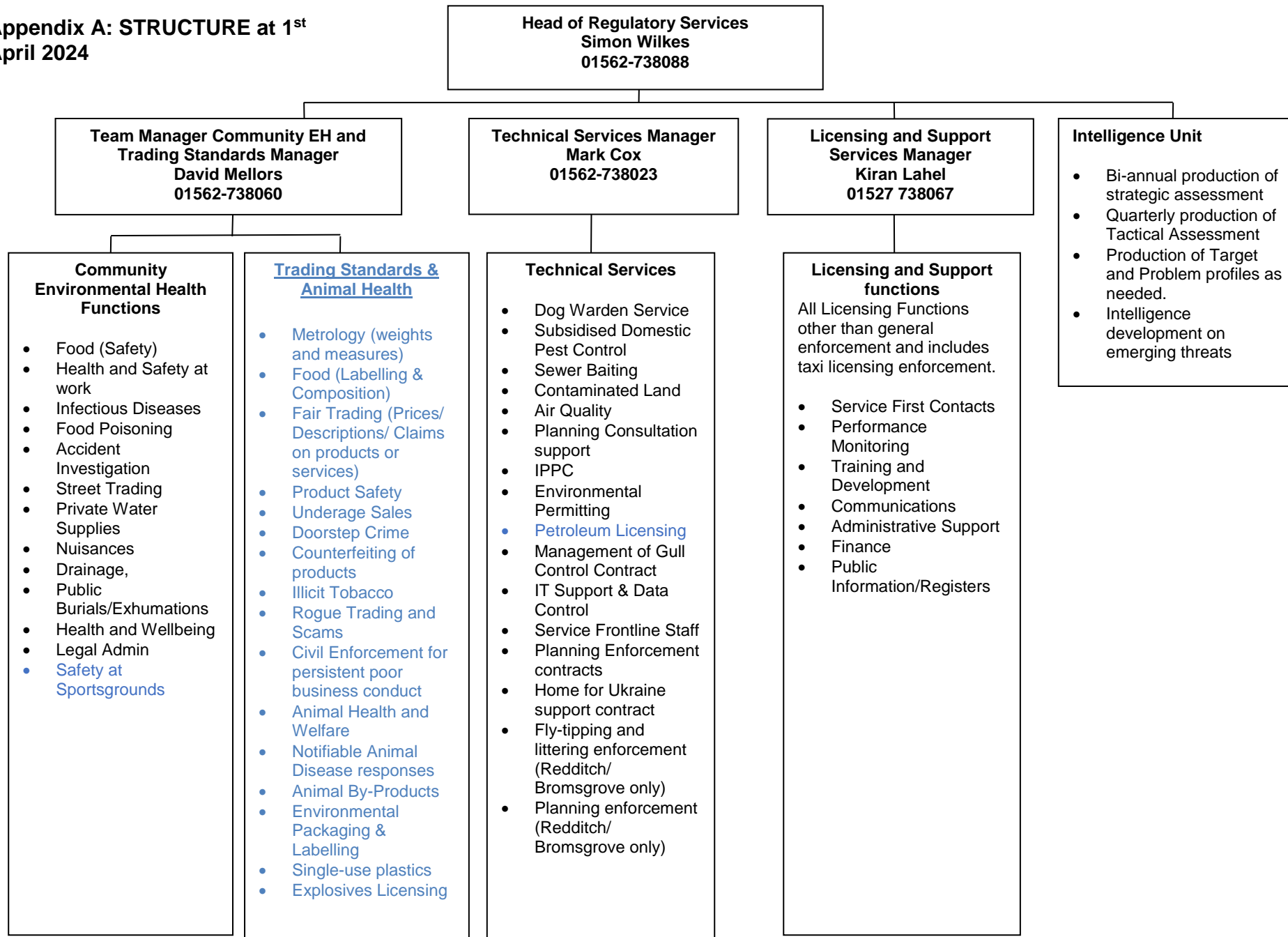
## 12. RISK & GOVERNANCE

Page 55  
The current governance arrangements came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> 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. Clearly the re-organisation announcement will have some impacts on the service but until the future structure of local government is agreed and a timetable set, the service will continue to deliver as it has since inception.

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. We will also add re-organisation to the register as a reminder that this is an issue that will need to be addressed in the coming years.

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 1<sup>st</sup>  
April 2024**





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

Account description	Budget	Budget	Budget
	2025 / 2026	2026 / 2027	2027 / 2028
	£000's	£000's	£000's
<b>Employees</b>			
Monthly salaries	4,395	4,501	4,606
Training for professional qualifications	0	0	0
Medical fees (employees')	2	2	2
Employers' liability insurance	21	21	21
Employees' professional subscriptions	4	4	4
<b>Sub-Total - Employees</b>	<b>4,421</b>	<b>4,527</b>	<b>4,633</b>
<b>Premises</b>			
Rents	80	82	84
Room hire	2	2	2
Trade Waste	1	1	1
<b>Sub-Total - Premises</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>Transport</b>			
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	58	58	58
<b>Sub-Total - Transport</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>92</b>

**Supplies & Service**

Equipment - purchase/maintenance/rental	36	36	36
Materials	9	9	9
Clothing, uniforms & laundry	2	2	2
Training fees	34	34	34
General insurances	16	16	16
Printing and stationery	17	17	17
Books and publications	2	2	2
Postage/packaging	11	11	11
ICT	70	70	70
Telephones	40	40	40
Taxi Tests	14	14	14
CRB Checks (taxi)	26	26	26
Support service recharges	132	136	140
Support service recharges - ICT	77	79	82
<b>Sub-Total - Supplies &amp; Service</b>	<b>486</b>	<b>492</b>	<b>498</b>

**Budget**  
**2025 / 2026**  
**£000's**

**Budget**  
**2026 / 2027**  
**£000's**

**Budget**  
**2027 / 2028**  
**£000's**

**Contractors**

Consultants / Contractors' fees/charges/SLA's	257	247	247
Advertising (general)	6	6	6
Grants and subscriptions	13	13	13
<b>Sub-Total - Contractors</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>265</b>

**Total Expenditure Budget****5,356****5,461****5,575**

**Income**

Grants / Primary Authority / Food Training / Contaminated Land / Stray Dogs / Ad Hoc	-463	-463	-463
Funding from Bromsgrove & Redditch for Enforcement Work	-482	-497	-512
<b>Sub-Total - Income</b>	<b>-945</b>	<b>-960</b>	<b>-975</b>

**Income**

Funding from partners for Technical Officers	-88	-78	-79
Funding from partners for Increase in Rent	-3	-5	-8
Funding from partners for Increase in ICT	-3	-5	-7
Funding from partners for Increase in Hosting Charges	-4	-8	-12
Funding from partners due to unavoidable salary pressures 24-25	-21	-21	-21
Funding from partners due to unavoidable salary pressures Excluding NI Increases 25-26	-94	-94	-94
Funding from partners due to unavoidable salary pressures NI Increases 25-26	-71	-71	-71
Funding from partners due to unavoidable salary pressures 26-27		-92	-92
Funding from partners due to unavoidable salary pressures 27-28			-89
<b>Sub-Total - Income</b>	<b>-283</b>	<b>-374</b>	<b>-473</b>

**Additional Income**

Agreed reduced charge to Worcester City Council	-30	-30	-30
<b>Sub-Total - Income</b>	<b>-30</b>	<b>-30</b>	<b>-30</b>

**Total Income Budget**

<b>DISTRICT PARTNERSHIP BUDGET</b>	<b>4,098</b>	<b>4,097</b>	<b>4,098</b>
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<b>25-26 Partner Percentages</b>		<b>%'s</b>
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%
<b>Total</b>		<b>100.00%</b>

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.

	<b>Contribution Technical Officers - Including NI Increase</b>	<b>Contribution Increase in Rent, ICT &amp; Hosting Charges</b>	<b>Unavoidable Salary Pressures</b>	<b>Total Partner Contribution</b>
	<b>2025 / 2026</b>	<b>2025 / 2026</b>	<b>24-25 &amp; 25-26</b>	<b>2025 / 2026</b>
<b>Budget 2025 / 26</b>	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>
<b>Bromsgrove District Council</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>352</b>
<b>Malvern Hills District Council</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Redditch Borough Council</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>205</b>
<b>Worcester City Council</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>Wychavon District Council</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Wyre Forest District Council</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>569</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>765</b>

	<b>Contribution Technical Officers - Including NI Increase</b>	<b>Contribution Increase in Rent, ICT &amp; Hosting Charges</b>	<b>Unavoidable Salary Pressures</b>	<b>Total Partner Contribution</b>
	<b>2026 / 2027</b>	<b>25-26 &amp; 26-27</b>	<b>24-25, 25-26 &amp; 26-27</b>	<b>Total Partner Contribution</b>
<b>Budget 2026 / 27</b>	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>
<b>Bromsgrove District Council</b>	<b>334</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>376</b>
<b>Malvern Hills District Council</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Redditch Borough Council</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>228</b>
<b>Worcester City Council</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>Wychavon District Council</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>Wyre Forest District Council</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>575</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>278</b>	<b>871</b>
	<b>Contribution Technical Officers</b>	<b>Contribution Increase in Rent, ICT &amp; Hosting Charges</b>	<b>Unavoidable Salary Pressures</b>	<b>Total Partner Contribution</b>
	<b>2027 / 2028</b>	<b>25-26, 26-27 &amp; 27-28</b>	<b>24-25, 25-26, 26-27 &amp; 27-28</b>	<b>Total Partner Contribution</b>
<b>Budget 2027 / 28</b>	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>
<b>Bromsgrove District Council</b>	<b>344</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>401</b>
<b>Malvern Hills District Council</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Redditch Borough Council</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>251</b>
<b>Worcester City Council</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>Wychavon District Council</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>108</b>
<b>Wyre Forest District Council</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>591</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>984</b>

## 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 <sup>st</sup> 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	<b>Amber</b>	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	<b>Amber</b>	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	<b>Amber/ Red</b>	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	<b>Amber</b>	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	<b>Green</b>	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	<b>Amber</b>	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	<b>Amber</b>		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	<b>Amber</b>		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	<b>Green</b>		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	<b>Amber</b>		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	<b>Amber/Red</b>	<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	<b>Green</b>	<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>
Local government Re-organisation	Ensuring the statutory regulatory functions are accommodated in any new unitary arrangements to meet the requirements of the new structure	On-going	High	Medium/ Low	<b>Green/ Amber</b>	<p>There is little for officers to do before any decisions on structures and timetable are made. The structuring of the shared service means that integration of these elements into one authority would be relatively straight-forward should a decision be taken on a unitary county model and, in the eventuality of multiple unitary authorities being the chosen model, the option to retain shared arrangement would remain, although it seems unlikely given previous re-organisations elsewhere.</p>



## WRS Board

Date: 20<sup>th</sup> February 2025

### Title: Activity and Performance Data Quarter 3 2024/25

#### 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 2024/25, but the actual data allows comparison with previous quarters and previous years.

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

#### Report

##### Activity Data

The number of dog control cases received in our system between 1st April 2024 and 31st December 2024 represents an increase of 13% compared to 2022/23 but a fall of 2% compared to 2023/24. As ever, the vast majority of cases (87%,) relate to reports of lost or stray dogs, usually where the animal has been held by a member of the public. There is no requirement in law for council dog wardens to patrol an area. The previously identified concern regarding the increase in the number of dogs picked up with welfare concerns and subsequently requiring veterinary treatment or examination has sadly continued. Approximately 52% of dogs have been successfully reunited with their owners although this figure is known to vary between local authorities.

The service receives a low number of what might be thought of as dog control complaints and enquiries each quarter. Based on the 68 complaints received during the year to 31<sup>st</sup> December, some 30 have related to dogs which are persistently straying from residential properties whilst 23 have related to dog fouling.

The number of Food Safety cases logged in our system in the first three quarters of 2024/5 represents a fall of 11% compared to 2022/23 and a reduction of 2% compared to 2023/24. Most service requests tend to be



# Agenda Item 6

enquiries, including requests for business advice, rather than complaints. Of the 357 actual food complaints received during the period, 69% have related to issues with food products (such as poor-quality food or food containing a foreign object,) whilst 31% have related to alleged poor hygiene standards or practices at food businesses. In relation to these latter cases, it is seldom that they result in action as, even if standards have slipped, they seldom mean a business scores less than 3 on the Food Hygiene Rating System, so are still making safe food.

Based on the 1,394 interventions undertaken during the year to date, a small percentage have resulted in a business being rated as "non-compliant" (issued a rating of 0, 1, or 2). A higher proportion of non-compliant ratings continue to be issued to the takeaway sector, pubs, and small retailers. To find out more about food hygiene ratings, members can visit <https://ratings.food.gov.uk>.

Quarter 3 saw health and safety work generally following trends, although the actual case number in the quarter fell slightly compared to the previous two. The number of cases received between 1st April and 31st December 2024 represents a fall of 11% compared to 2022/23 but an increase of 4% compared to 2023/24. Many cases are enquiries as with the food area but approximately 45% have been reports of accidents in workplaces, with most cases relating to injuries where a worker was incapacitated for more than seven days or relate to injuries to members of the public. The most common cause of accidents continues to be slips, trips and falls (whether on the same level or from height). Sadly, the service has investigated another fatality during the current year after a contractor working at a retail outlet was crushed by a piece of mechanical equipment. Several other cases involving fatalities remain on-going.

Licensing application numbers during Q3 and 4 generally fall compared to Q2 figures and this year has continued this trend. Complaints and enquiries fell during Q3 compared to Q2, but overall, they probably remain on trend. The overall number of cases received between 1st April and 31st December 2024 represents an increase of 4% compared to 2022/23 but is consistent with 2023/24. In terms of the breakdown between application work and complaint/ enquiry work, around 65% of cases consist of applications and registrations, with the remainder being the complaints and enquiries. Some 30% of applications related to private hire or hackney carriage vehicles and a further 27% were temporary event notices.

As with other areas of work, the service receives a higher number of enquiries, such as queries about regulations, by-laws, and licence conditions compared with what might be described as complaints involving licensed businesses or individuals. Looking at the latter, during this financial year so far, some 41% of complaints have related to taxi licensing (such as reports of poor driver behaviour, unauthorised parking, or poor driving standards,) and 17% have related to alcohol licensing (business allegedly breaching the four licensing objectives). A further 10% of complaints have related to animal licensing with most cases relating to the unlicensed breeding and/or sale of dogs.



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Planning enquiries in Quarter 3 continued the upward trend previously described. The number of cases received to the end of quarter 3 represents an increase of 29% compared to 2022/23 and an increase of 18% compared to 2023/24. Around 89% of enquiries have been consultations for air quality, contaminated land, or nuisances; and 1 in 4 enquiries are now processed (on a contractual basis) on behalf of other local authorities as part of the service's income generation activities.

Members will see that the fall in nuisance complaints through quarter 3 mirrors previous seasonal patterns reflecting the poor weather we have seen in 2024/5. The number of cases received between 1st April and 31st December 2024 represents a reduction of 29% compared to 2022/23 and 22% compared to 2023/24. This is all likely driven by poor weather. Approximately 90% of cases have been reports of nuisances with around 43% of cases relating to noise from domestic properties (such as noise from barking dogs or noise from loud music). Other prominent nuisances commonly include noise from hospitality businesses, smoke from the burning of domestic or commercial waste, and dust from construction sites.

"Public Health" cases are often included alongside nuisance as they are addressed with similar legislation. The number received during the first three quarters of 2024/5 represents an increase of 4% compared to 2022/23 but a reduction of 4% compared to 2023/24. Approximately 62% of cases have related to pest control such as enquiries about domestic treatments, enquiries about sewer baiting, or complaints about pest activity caused by the actions of neighbouring residents or businesses. A further 24% of cases have related to accumulations at residential properties, however, such complaints often reference the presence of rodents or other pest species.

Based on the 634 domestic treatments undertaken by pest control contractors during the year to date, 59% were due to issues with rodents whilst 35% have taken place at properties in the Redditch district.

## Performance

Quarter 3 is another more limited reporting period. The non-business customer measure at 58.6%, is slightly lower than at the same point last year (60.7%,) but slightly above the previous one (57.9%,) Whilst we saw reduced demand for nuisance work during the period, it seems likely that problems in other areas of work like animal licensing may be reflected here. Response numbers also remain low with under 80 replies received from April to December. 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 54.2 % is slightly below the figures at the same point in the previous 2-years.

Business customer satisfaction has fallen slightly this quarter to 96.8% but is still well above last year's 92% at the same point in the year.



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Overall numbers of compliant and non-compliant food businesses were at 98.3% and 1.7% respectively. This remains good and on a par with previous years.

The ratio of compliments to complaints remains good at 58 to 17.

Staff sickness has increased from 1.42 days per FTE to 2.94 days per FTE cumulative for the year. This is higher than last year but close to the level at the same point in the previous 2-years (2.44, 2.94). Whilst the cold and flu viruses appear to be worse this year than last, over 36% of sickness fell into the long term (i.e., member of staff being off for 28 days plus,) so some of this is down to serious illness being suffered by one or two members of staff. Sickness also 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

David Mellors  
Community EH Manager  
01562 738060  
David.Mellors@worcsregservices.gov.uk

## Background Papers

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





## Appendix B: Performance indicator table

**Table of Pls 2024/5**

Indicator	Reporting period	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4/ Outrun
1. % of service requests where resolution is achieved to customers satisfaction	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	60	58.5	58.6	
2. % of service requests where resolution is achieved to business satisfaction	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	98.3	97.7	96.7	
3. % businesses broadly compliant at first assessment/ inspection	Annually	98.7	Bromsgrove 99.5 Malvern Hills 97.7 Redditch 98.0 Worcester City 99.3 Wychavon 98.1 Wyre Forest 97.4 <b>Worcestershire 98.4</b>	98.3	Bromsgrove Malvern Hills Redditch Worcester City Wychavon Wyre Forest <b>Worcestershire</b>
4. % of food businesses scoring 0,1 or 2 at 1 <sup>st</sup> April each year	Annually	1.3	Bromsgrove 0.5 Malvern Hills 2.3 Redditch 2.0 Worcester City 0.7 Wychavon 1.9 Wyre Forest 2.1 <b>Worcestershire 1.6</b>	1.7	Bromsgrove Malvern Hills Redditch Worcester City Wychavon Wyre Forest <b>Worcestershire</b>
5 % of drivers licence renewal applications issued within 5 working days of receipt of a complete application	6-monthly	NA	<b>97.6%</b>	NA	
6 % of vehicles found to be defective whilst in service Number of vehicles found to be defective by district and the percentage this represents of the fleet county-wide	6-monthly	NA	26= 1.54% of 1684 vehicles on the road county-wide  BDC 1 MHDC 2 RBC 18 WC 6 WDC 1 WFDC 0	NA	



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7	% of service requests where customer indicates they feel better equipped to deal with issues themselves in future	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	50	51.9	54.2	
8	Review of register of complaints/compliments	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	5/11	12/26	17/58	
9	Annual staff sickness absence at public sector average or better	Quarterly NB: figure is cumulative	1.13 days per FTE	1.55 days per FTE	2.94 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 4.2 Malvern Hills 3.5 Redditch 3.0 Worcester City 5.5 Wychavon 2.2 Wyre Forest 5.9 <b>Worcestershire 4.0</b>	NA	Bromsgrove Malvern Hills Redditch Worcester City Wychavon Wyre Forest <b>Worcestershire</b>
12	Rate of noise complaint per 1000 head of population	6-monthly	NA	Bromsgrove 0.55 Malvern Hills 0.68 Redditch 0.69 Worcester City 0.74 Wychavon 0.60 Wyre Forest 0.79 <b>Worcestershire 0.67</b>	NA	Bromsgrove Malvern Hills Redditch Worcester City Wychavon Wyre Forest <b>Worcestershire</b>
13	Total income expressed as a % of district base revenue budget (16/17)	6-monthly	NA	£258,989 which is 8.6% as a proportion of the 2016/17 revenue budget figure (£3,017,000)	NA	



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

*Supporting and protecting you*

# Activity Report | 2024-25



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District Council  
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WYCHAVON  
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*good services, good value*



**Wyre Forest**  
District Council

# Foreword

Written by Simon Wilkes (Director of Regulatory Services)

Welcome to the third activity report for 2024/25. It follows the familiar format that long standing Board members will have seen many times. This covers the period 1st October to 31st December 2024, but the graphs and tables allow comparison with the data in previous quarters and years.

Stray dog numbers continue to be high due to new contracts with other authorities, and managing the space with kennelling partners has been taxing at times. Numbers are similar to last year but well above the previous.

Food cases (complaints and enquiries,) are below 2022/3 but and remains around 2023/4 levels. A good number (some 1,394,) food interventions under FHRS have taken place this year and still they paint a picture of high levels of compliance. Quarter 3 saw health and safety work generally following trends, although the actual case number in the quarter fell slightly compared to the previous two.

After falling between Q1 and 2, numbers of information requests increased slightly during Q3, moving back toward the upward trend line. 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 2024/5 may be the busiest year of the last three.

Licensing application numbers during Q3 and 4 generally fall compared to Q2 figures and this year has continued this trend. Complaints and enquiries fell during Q3 compared to Q2, but overall, they probably remain on trend. Overall numbers are likely to be similar to last year.

Pollution and nuisance complaints followed their usual seasonal downward trend from Q2 throughout Q3. Overall numbers are lower this year because of the relatively poor Summer weather, and its continuance into the Autumn. Looking at the figures, Q3 was lower in terms of demand than the same period in the previous two. This continues to demonstrate 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, but appear to be more or less on trend.

We hope the report demonstrates the volume of work staff are undertaking and that some of the stories behind the numbers highlight the difficulties staff sometimes face. If you have further queries, please feel free to contact myself and the Team Managers.

Many thanks,



Simon

# Community Environmental Health

Written by David Mellors (Environmental Health And Trading Standards Manager)

## Quarter One

The routine food hygiene intervention programme continued with support from our contractors. The recruitment process for the 5 new food safety officers agreed by the Board commenced to support this work. This is a key priority as we not only have our 2024-2025 businesses to inspect but also some 600 existing and new premises outstanding from 2023-2024. The latter have been risk assessed to ensure that we focus resources on the highest risk businesses.

Compliance continues to be very high with over 90% of premises achieving Food Hygiene Rating System (FHRS) scores for of Level 4-5. Level 3 is considered to demonstrate that premises are broadly compliant with the law, so these premises exceed the statutory requirements.

As always officers continue to find poor premises where more formal action is required. One persistently non-compliant premises (a bakery in Malvern) where the food business operator has shown reluctance over an extended period to make the serious improvements needed is currently going through the formal legal process. Officers also investigated chocolate Easter eggs at a major retailer that were found to have been nibbled by mice. Work is ongoing to bring these premises into compliance.

The aggregators (Just Eat, Deliveroo etc) now remove businesses with very poor scores from their platforms. Consequently, those poor performers wishing to partner with them tend to improve quickly and often pay for a re-rating. Getting a good FHRS score is a key driver to compliance. There are also early signs that numbers of new premises may be on an upward trend with more mobile and home-based traders registering with us. Indeed, the seemingly never-ending coffee shop openings continue, although we may now be at saturation point as several have also closed. The business closures reported appear to be mostly down to increased costs of staff, food, and energy.

We were also involved in two national initiatives in Quarter one.

- The Food Standards Agency's continuing national E Coli investigation. Worcestershire has several growers who supply the major sandwich producers and have been identified as the possible source. All the Worcestershire businesses involved have co-operated fully in providing the information requested.
- A traceability exercise on imported meat products led by the National Food Crime Unit. We worked closely with Trading Standards colleagues at the County Council on the latter as it often involved poor labelling. It is a legal requirement that food is labelled in English. In one case officers had to use an interpreter as none of the items found could be identified. The operation led to food being removed from the market.

A considerable amount of officer time was spent working with UKHSA (UK Health Security Agency) in an investigation into a Cryptosporidium outbreak at a farm in Worcestershire which received extensive media coverage. The number of reported cases ran into the hundreds and is said to be the largest known outbreak of its type. As this is also a working farm your officers had to work closely with the Health & Safety Executive on enforcement issues.

Officers also dealt with over 200 food complaints and enquiries about food premises and issued 23 Export Certificates.

In statutory nuisance work, an Abatement Notice was served on a public house in May under the Environmental Protection Act for noise from outdoor music events, and a noisy cockerel was put before the courts! Preliminary meetings were held for events including summer music festivals, and officers worked with event organisers for a previously controversial bank holiday event as well as preparation for the Christmas light switch on in Worcester.

Complex health and safety investigations continued, with your Officers attending the inquest into the death of a participant in a charity boxing event, and a dog sledging accident investigation was concluded.

## Quarter Two

Interviews for the recruitment of five new officers into the Community Environmental Health Team as agreed by the Board to meet the requirements of the Food Standards Agency food safety recovery programme were concluded in Q2. The outcome was successful in that three additional Regulatory Support Officers (RSO) joined us in September. They come from diverse backgrounds, namely travel, retail and teaching. One is also a fluent Chinese speaker. As WRS continue to lead the way in developing the RSO role our Principal Officer (Food) has developed a specific training programme to ensure they are 'competent' to deal with low-risk premises as required by the Food Law Code of Practice. Job offers were also made for two Technical Officer posts in food safety, and another to fill the vacancy in noise/pollution work. They will commence employment next quarter.

Major investigations in Q2 included noise from the refurbishment of a Sainsburys supermarket in Worcester with numerous complaints of night time disturbance whilst floors were being dug up. Site meetings were held with the local Councillor and members of Sainsburys senior management and compromise reached on permissible activities at specific hours. We also received an appeal in respect of a Noise Abatement Notice served on a public house in Droitwich for excessively loud music impacting on an elderly neighbour. We await a court date.

A prosecution file for a local bakery which is consistently non-compliant was submitted to Malvern Hills District Council. We continued as ever to undertake routine inspections completing 450 high risk visits during the quarter. Most premises continue with good levels of compliance although there does appear to be an upwards trend in premises dropping in their FHRS rating. Failure to have a documented system, poor cleaning, lack of training and inadequate pest control were the main reasons.

A farm in Bromsgrove was one of several venues which held music events under temporary event notices which were monitored over the summer using both noise monitoring equipment and personal visits by members of the team.



Evidence of breaches of a noise abatement notice was established during an ongoing investigation into loud music from a residential address in Worcester. A prosecution file has subsequently been prepared ready for submission to the legal team.

Quotations have been obtained for a major works in default project to replace a failed sewage treatment system in Barnt Green, Bromsgrove.

A licence review has been instigated in relation to a public house in Worcester following ongoing noise complaints concerning loud music and late-night noise from customers on the premises.

In addition, your officers provided evidence at a Licence application hearing, having made representations concerning premises in Wyre Forest which included proposals for outdoor music events until 0100 hours. As a result, the applicant amended their application for outdoor music to end by 2200 hours and agreed to a number of additional noise control conditions.

### Quarter Tree

The Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (formerly the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) wrote to local authorities last May, asking them to visit funeral directors trading in their areas. This was in response to the situation in Hull, concerning Legacy Independent Funeral Directors. The purpose of this initiative was to restore public confidence in the funeral sector.

WRS agreed to participate in this initiative on behalf of the Partner authorities, and our Funeral Directors Project began in Q3 with a visit to the premises of a local representative of a national trade body for officers to familiarise themselves with best practice in the funeral industry. A programme of visits across the county was planned and is now being implemented.

Budgetary approval has been given for major works in default to resolve an ongoing drainage issue in Barnt Green. An old septic tank system and soakaway at a residential property has failed and is giving rise to discharges of sewage across the property and into the road. A specification has been drawn up and quotes obtained to carry out remedial works including the installation of a modern packaged sewage treatment plant with consented discharge into the highway drainage system, avoiding the need for a new soakaway which would have been costly and disruptive and prone to future failure.

Following the investigation of alleged breaches of a noise abatement notice served on an occupier of a housing association house in Worcester, officers provided evidence and witness statements to the association who are using the evidence to seek eviction of the tenant through the County Court process.

An investigation was carried out into alleged smoke nuisance from solid fuel heating appliances emanating from moored narrow boats in a marina in Worcester. Whilst no statutory nuisance was witnessed, the type of appliances and fuel being used were checked and verified to meet Smoke Control Area requirements, and the marina management company are considering a voluntary grant to support owners switching to alternative heating sources where viable.

Alleged smoke nuisance emanating from a farm in a village in Wychavon was investigated by the team, where it appeared that waste was being imported to the site and burned. Whilst no smoke nuisance has been witnessed to date, officers have been in liaison with colleagues from the Environment Agency and Planning Enforcement officers to consider other potential means of regulating waste disposal activities on the site.

Several cases of bed bug infestations, which were proving difficult to eradicate, were identified by officers this quarter. The service has identified an increasing trend of infestations where it appears that limited household cleaning combined with potential resistance to currently permitted pesticides can lead to long term infestations persisting despite multiple costly pest control visits and treatments. Work continues in gathering intelligence in this area so that a suitable control strategy may be developed. In partnership working, the Safety Advisory Group chaired by WRS met for Worcester Racecourse's end of season meeting, the team continued their work in multi-agency partnership groups and your officers continue to assist the Worcestershire Coroner regarding a workplace death.

# Licensing

Written by Kiran Lahel (Licensing And Support Services Manager)

## Quarter One

On the whole there was a slight downward trajectory in licensing enquiries at the start of the quarter which is not dissimilar to other years at Q1 where this tends to be the calmer period between Christmas and summer queries. The team however have continued to remain busy due to other priorities which have namely taken the shape of policy matters that have required significant input from the teams.

At the beginning of April, it was announced that the Pavement Licensing Scheme that was originally introduced during the covid pandemic under the Business and Planning Act 2020 were to be made permanent as of the 31st March 2024 by provisions made in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023. This has therefore involved the team putting together a new pavement licensing policy based on the new legislation for each district council and presenting the new policy to all licensing committees or similar with a recommendation to consult on each policy for implementation. In the meantime the team are continuing with the temporary scheme until such decisions are made.

A review of the Taxi Standards that were implemented by all district councils in 2022 highlighted the need to make safeguarding training for all taxi drivers mandatory. As part of the initial changes a mandatory requirement for all NEW drivers to undertake the competency certificate was introduced. This is a thorough training session looking at all aspects that are required for a taxi driver to do their role including equalities, safeguarding, communication, driver conduct and responsibilities. The feedback from drivers has remained positive and valuable but showed a uneven playing field with half of drivers now trained and others not. As a result, officers have presented reports to all district councils recommending that all drivers undertake safeguarding training and undertake refresher training every three years.

Members Training commenced across all districts in June with officers providing training to new and established members of the committee. A new interactive format has been welcomed by members and has allowed different scenarios to be played out through role play and videos which has allowed a multitude of different questions asked by councillors to get themselves ready for the role.

During the pandemic, an operation commenced to look at illegal dog breeding across Worcestershire and the results clearly brought to light the amount of people that were unlicensed and illegally selling dogs across the County. As a result, various teams across WRS including Licensing, the intelligence unit and the Dog Warden service have worked together to educate, communicate and monitor complaints in order to reduce this number in the long term. Earlier this year a second operation commenced through the intelligence team and again they identified there still to be a large number of potential illegal dog breeding cases across the County. Although it had reduced since the first operation the numbers still signified a problem and as a result licensing officers are now investigating a number of cases that will either result in licence applications being submitted, warning letters distributed, or enforcement action being taken.

Finally, the team have been working with Technical Services and the Intelligence team on introducing a new triage process for calls and queries. Licensing remains the service with the highest volume of call and queries to the duty desk. As a result, some of these queries are referred to a licensing technical officer but could be answered by the duty officer team. Both teams have been working together to establish a set of processes that the duty officers can use to enable them to efficiently navigate through the questions/queries they receive daily. The intelligence team have highlighted from information and data collected which areas of licensing form the largest numbers of queries in order to aid prioritisation.

## Quarter Two

The summer spike tends to show impact in this quarter with evidence of applications and queries higher than the last quarter. Most of these relate to both Taxi Licensing and the Licensing Act and due to summer leave in the team this can be a challenging quarter for officers with fewer staff members in over the summer period.

Offices have been busy working on a number of policies for consultation this quarter ranging from new policies including the 'Pavement licensing policy' that has started to make its way back from consultation in some districts and the 'Mandatory Safeguarding for Taxi Drivers' that has also started to make its way back from consultation in some districts. But also, policies that require review based on statutory requirements such as the Gambling Policy. All consultations are posted on each individual district website to reply to and hard copies can be collected from the districts if required.

The number of new Animal licensing inspections have been slowly increasing and there has been a programme of interim inspections scheduled which has required more officers to get involved than usual. The team have also been working on Operation Lisbon where investigations remain ongoing.

Enforcement work continues across the team including evening work on taxi ranks, officers investigating suspended premises licences and interim animal inspections scheduled whereby there has been intelligence received regarding a licensed or unlicensed premises.

Alongside operational and day to day work the team continues to strive for efficiencies and have been continuing their work on implementing Victoria forms for the automation of licensing forms and a number of procurement projects including making the DBS process for taxi drivers more efficient and last but not least the procurement of veterinary services for animal licensing inspections.

## Quarter Three

It has been a combination of queries, enforcement, consultations, and inspections this quarter. The introduction of the TENs form via Victoria forms seems to have reduced the number of queries being received regarding TENs as the more detailed FAQs are answering a lot of the questions that applicants have. Many of the queries around this quarter tend to be for Halloween, Bonfire and Christmas events.

The team continue to work closely with the intelligence team and have made good progress on Operation Lisbon and are now working on Operation Rome looking at taxi matters in several districts. If successful, the team will look to deploy it across all of the districts where over ranking and out of area vehicles have given rise for concern.

The Safeguarding and Pavement licensing policies are still making their way through the various Licensing Committees and are all at different stages of either consultation or waiting to be presented at Committee. Both Worcester City and Wyre Forest Licensing Committees have already approved the safeguarding training proposals and drivers are already undertaking Safeguarding training in Wyre Forest with Worcester City drivers starting in January.

Animal Licensing inspections continue, and the team now have four qualified officers with a fifth officer nearly completing their qualification. It is important to note that this area of licensing has developed since the introduction of the Animal Licensing Regulations in 2018 and the proactive work involved has resulted in positive outcomes for the service.

All things Wild had an interim visit scheduled this quarter and there were no concerns raised by the team or the Zoo itself. They continue to follow and adhere to the policies and guidance as required.

And finally, an event that a number of the team get involved in and enjoy working with partners to ensure compliance was the involvement with colleagues across the city at the Victorian Fayre. Again, the team worked collaboratively with other services across the City to ensure the annual event went to plan.

# Technical Services

Written by Mark Cox (Technical Services Manager)

## Quarter One

Our Air Quality work continued to work at pace. As well as drafting and submission of 6 Annual Status Reports by the team for all 6 Districts, a draft Air Quality Action Plan for Worcester City successfully navigated through Worcester City Council Committees. A behaviour change survey, jointly developed with Public Health also closed and the results stated to be analysed. Initial steering group meetings with key stakeholders were held for Bromsgrove and Wyre Forest District Council's in order to produce a draft Air Quality Action Plan for both by November 2024. Our AQ Behaviour Change work also has begun to pick up pace starting with lots of contact with schools some of which have led to visits.

During this period the draft Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy for Redditch Borough Council was finalised. This updated strategy reviews and replaces the 2001 document taking account of changes in the Contaminated Land Statutory Guidance 2012, national policy, council policy, and sets out the Council's strategic approach to review and assessment of contaminated land. The document is due to go to RBC committee in October 2024. The strategies for the other districts will follow on the back of this draft.

Although contract work for Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) came to an end during April 2024 we continued to offer contracted support to Gloucester City Council (GCC), East Staffordshire (ESBC) and North Warwickshire Borough Council's (NWBC) as well as the six Worcestershire districts. This often involves reviewing complex reports provided in support of planning applications and discharge of planning condition requests. We are asked to comment on the whole range of planning applications, large and small, including residential developments, commercial, infrastructure projects, solar farms, industrial processes, extensions, change of use, conversion of buildings and any other development where contamination may be a relevant consideration.

Interesting cases to note include the demolition and redevelopment of Bromsgrove Fire Station, a fuel depot in Gloucester City and an old farm near Pinvin all for various uses including residential development.

Routine Industrial Permitting work including inspection of large industrial processes, foundries and casting through to cement processing and petrol stations all continued. No significant issues arisen apart from continuing complaints against a large manufacturing facility in the Gloucester area.

As of April 2024, the current 2 remaining COVID Advisors are continuing to assist with the Homes for Ukraine scheme along with a principal officer managing the scheme in Bromsgrove and Redditch. Throughout Q1 significant effort have been dedicated to school and college registrations, the support workers have been working with education officers and Ukrainian guest with the registration process, applications, references and have accompanied several students to college open evenings; also supported parent with worries about school documentation, attended school meeting and helped rectify any issues that arose.

In April the Homes for Ukraine team had a meeting with an external Mental Health team to discuss some complex issues and best ways to deal with them, and in May we met with the wider Redditch Council Housing Team to build a relationship and discuss the best approach on how we can work together to support our guests on the scheme. As usual team have continued to support guests move from their hosts to independent living in either Social Housing or Private Rented Accommodation, this consists of financial advice, help setting up utilities, sourcing furniture and household goods and help getting children into schools / colleges. There were 2 new arrivals in Bromsgrove and 10 new arrivals in Redditch.

This first quarter of the new financial year is always busy from an IT development perspective as we prepare and submit most of our government returns. Over the quarter we have also taken part in various cyber security awareness activities designed to increase the security and resilience of the computer system we use. We have also worked to enhance service delivery, with these activities including regular updates and patches to our main back office system, record retention and deletions. We also offered PAT testing for all electrical equipment located in our offices and for remote working equipment. We are obliged to complete this every 2 years. Work on Service-wide projects has also continued including the Automation Project and introduction of Taxi digital Identity records. We have continued income generation work with Bromsgrove and Redditch Planning, Worcestershire Trading Standards, and Tewkesbury Borough Council's Environmental Health and Licensing.

## Quarter Two

For the Technical Pollution team, work on the 2 new draft Air Quality Action Plans commenced at pace for both Bromsgrove and Wyre Forest District Councils. This work involved continuation of the steering group meetings following from Q1 and into Q2 followed by detailed source apportionment, modelling, quantification and feasibility study assessment of the measures together with report writing. Additionally, our behaviour change work began to accelerate with contact with 49 schools to introduce our AQ work and Real Time Air Quality Portal.

A new draft Contaminated Land Strategy for Redditch Council was produced and submitted to the portfolio holder for consideration prior to Committee stages leading to sign off by Full Council later in 2024. Redditch's Strategy is the first in a refresh programme for all of the District Council's strategies, with the one for Malvern Hills proposed to follow in early 2025. We continue our contract work for North Warwickshire, Gloucester City and East Staffordshire District - including sites within Uttoxeter and Burton-on-Trent. The team have dealt with a couple of interesting cases in Gloucester requesting sign off of technical conditions, a standout being large new housing development at Hill Farm, Hempsted Lane, Gloucester. At Bakers Quay, Gloucester we also dealt with some sign off validation for areas of the site where planning consent was granted back in 2014 when the site was still being investigated/assessed and a remedial strategy agreed. We also provided support to our planning officers on a complex planning application at the Roxel Group site, near Stourport as well as several solar farms and battery storage facilities with scoping consultations and/or Environmental Information Requests across the Districts.

In terms of Environmental Permitting, a significant amount of time has been spent dealing with Modern Packaging in Pershore to upgrade their existing abatement technology as well as dealing with Roger Dyson (Foundry) in Droitwich Spa to improve their solvent management plan. As part of our contract work, minor issues involving Permal in Gloucester are ongoing and we are in liaison with Gloucester City representatives.

For our Database administration and information technology support team, over this second quarter we took part in various cyber security awareness activities designed to increase the security and resilience of the computer system we use. This quarter we facilitated the introduction of the new Mimecast e-mail security system. At the beginning of the quarter the 2 remaining COVID Advisor continued to assist with the Homes for Ukraine scheme along with a principal officer managing the scheme in Bromsgrove and Redditch. Also, in July we successfully recruited another part time Homes for Ukraine support worker into the team.

As well as the usual routine support given to existing guests, hosts, and new arrivals, significant time and effort was dedicated to school and college registrations. Specifically on-going support was provided to three Students trying to get into college and university, with liaison between them and the education authorities. Other support is provided such as that provided to support Ukrainian guests who wanted to improve their job prospects, liaising with the job centre to access available free courses. Offering Employment advice to two young Male guests and helping with CVs. There have been 2 new young mothers in recent months, who have received help and advice from the support workers such as childcare, medical support, healthy starts scheme, visas and passports. Between the team there has been attendance at Bromsgrove and Redditch welcome refugees support groups and the Ukrainian Pop-up café hosted in the Bromsgrove Methodist church.

During September we saw an increase in demand for more hosts with three new arrivals in Redditch, due to the ongoing war in Ukraine and with the colder months approaching and the continuation of blackouts. We are continuing to explore different ways to try and attract new hosts to the scheme. Again, during September following the loss of one Dog Warden and with the commencement of new contracts with Birmingham, Solihull and North Somerset, we increased the number of dog wardens from two full time to now having three full time and a part-time warden.

Unfortunately, due to the new contracts we have had to put to sleep increasing numbers of stray dogs because of aggression primarily, but also because we have received higher numbers of pitbulls and XL Bully dogs (both banned breeds). The heightened levels of aggression in some of the stray dogs has caused a significant percentage which are not rehomeable to be put to sleep using a dart gun at the kennels, minimising risk to wardens, the public and the vet by not having to move the dog unnecessarily. As well as the larger bull breeds, we have also seen an increase in the number of puppies and dogs with significant welfare support needs. We attempt to meet the identified best method of caring for each dog which may mean alternative forms of boarding outside of our contracted kennels, such as fostering.

### Quarter Three

Continuing the air quality work that was undertaken, Worcester City's final version of their Air Quality Action Plan was approved by the necessary Committees and submitted to Defra, followed by consultation drafts approved for Bromsgrove and Wyre Forest District Councils. Alongside the action planning work, our Behavioural Change Officer has been visiting a number of schools across the County and rolled out air quality behaviour change surveys to 126 schools with 338 respondents and a survey with HoW college reaching 741 students and staff.

The revised Redditch Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy was approved in November which updated the strategy to take into account recent legislative changes and work undertaken recently. Work commenced on updating the Malvern Hills Strategy document for approval.

For the officers supporting guests from Ukraine, significant time and effort continues to be dedicated to school registrations with the closing date for secondary schools being 31st October for September 2025.



There were several important updates regarding BRP [immigration status card] replacements, Ukraine Permission Extension [UPE] scheme, changes for those sponsoring/hosting close family members and changes to sponsor monthly thank you payments which meant the team has been inundated with questions from both hosts and guests: The 'BRP' has replaced eVisa with all BRP cards expiring on 31st December 2024. HCLG updated the guidance in October for councils on the Homes for Ukraine scheme. These changes meant that those sponsoring/hosting close family members under the scheme will no longer be eligible for thank you payments. Similarly in December, the Government announced future reductions in the sponsor monthly thank you payments.

There is still a demand for more hosts for Ukrainians wanting to flee the war in Ukraine and the continuous blackouts during the colder months, during November the team have been busy trying to attract more hosts by contacting all previous hosts, parish councils, women's institute, church groups and the refugee support group charities to raise awareness. With the support of Bromsgrove and Redditch comms team we started the "What it means to me" campaign to raise awareness of the need for more hosts and to encourage people to apply. There was an interview with Free Radio on 26th November, both RBC and BDC websites were updated on 27th November, Support Worker Tetiana Ponomar had a large news article in the Redditch Standard in early December and there was a social media post on Redditch Matters Instagram page on 26th December. In December a Breakfast with Santa event was held which 14 children attended. There were 7 new arrivals in Q3 in Redditch.

As the team have been gathering information on fly tips for the past 6 months (in the Bromsgrove and Redditch areas), we are able to identify specific areas that are hot spots for such activity. Cameras are specifically targeting these areas and have been successful in capturing offenders, these are currently being investigated. As we continue to focus on these specific areas our intel led approach is being reviewed every month to make sure we have the most up to date information to best utilise the resource we have to try and slow down the prolific tipping in these areas. The Environmental Enforcement Team have been busy preparing their enforcement files since the delivering the service with the first of many fixed penalty notices being served as an alternative to prosecution, with all paid to date.

As you will see from the figures on page 11, the number of stray dog reports has significantly increased to the highest level in the last three years. In this quarter the trend of stray dogs that are seized being in poor condition continues. This has included dogs that are underweight, and those that suffer with sores, injuries and fur loss. Even though it has been a year since the XL Bully ban, we seized 34 this quarter although only 10 within Worcestershire. Whilst we recognise the requirement to euthanise banned breed dogs if unclaimed, it is distressing for wardens and kennel staff. There have also been a number of puppies coming in which need extra care and attention, often having to go into foster rather than kennels.

This quarter we continued our work with our Host IT and back-office support company to completely refresh our Database address gazetteer to include regular updates going forward. We have worked with our Host IT to help them to introduce a new e-mail security system, and increase the time our back office database system is available.

# Dog Control

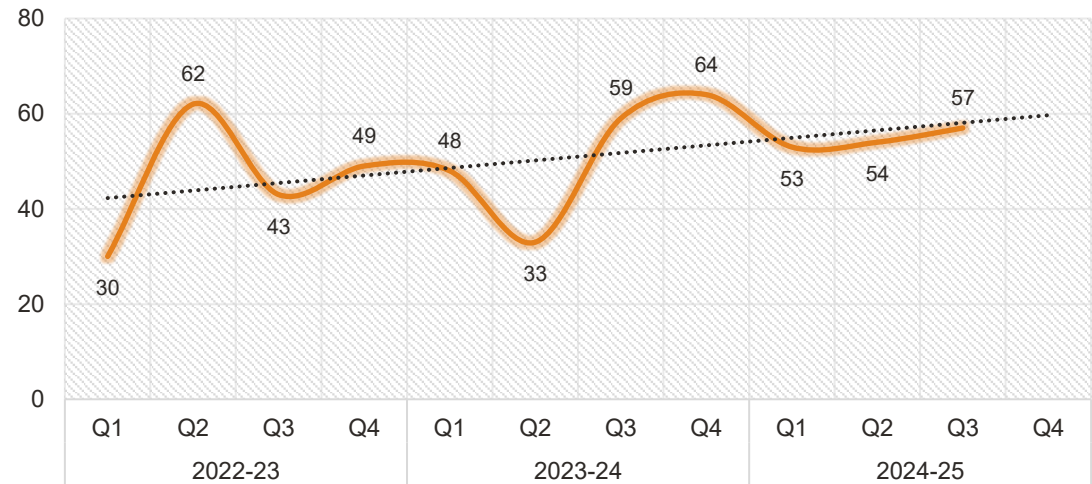
The data on this page outlines the number of dog control cases (complaints, enquiries, and reports of lost or stray dogs) handled by the service. Complaints received by WRS include reports of dangerous dogs, reports of dog fouling, and reports of dogs persistently straying. Complaints relating to the welfare of dogs, however, are investigated by the RSPCA and West Mercia Police unless the dog is found to be straying.

## Comments

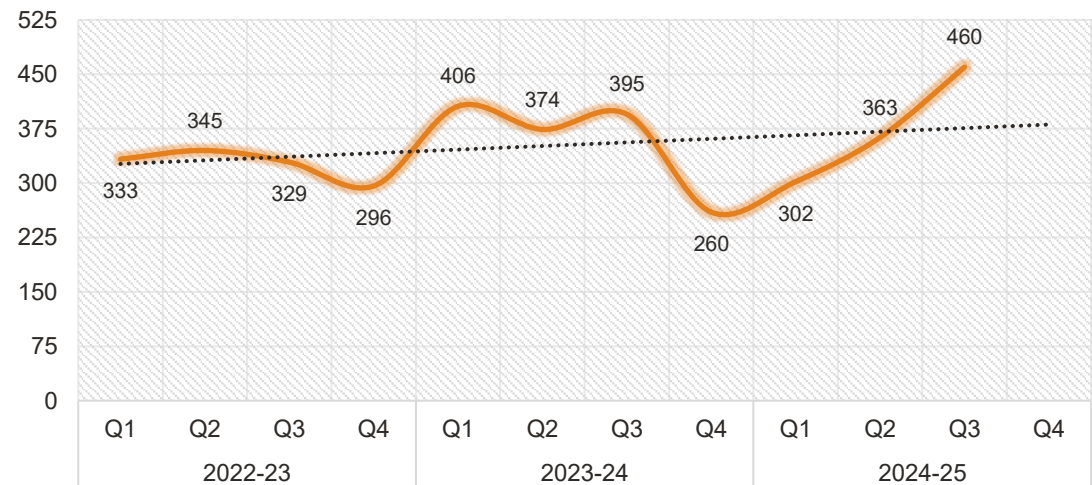
The number of cases received between 1st April 2024 and 31st December 2024 is an increase of 13% compared to 2022/23 but a reduction of 2% compared to 2023/24. Approximately 87% of cases have been reports of lost or stray dogs with most cases categorised as "contained strays" (meaning dogs were found and held by members of the public). There has, however, been a notable increase in the number of dogs picked up with welfare concerns and subsequently requiring veterinary treatment or examination. Approximately 52% of dogs have been successfully reunited with their owners although this figure is known to vary between local authorities.

In general terms, the service receives a low number of dog control complaints and enquiries each quarter. Based on the 68 complaints received during the year to date, 30 have related to dogs which are persistently straying from residential properties whilst 23 have related to dog fouling.

Complaints and Enquiries



Reports of Lost or Stray Dogs



# Food Safety

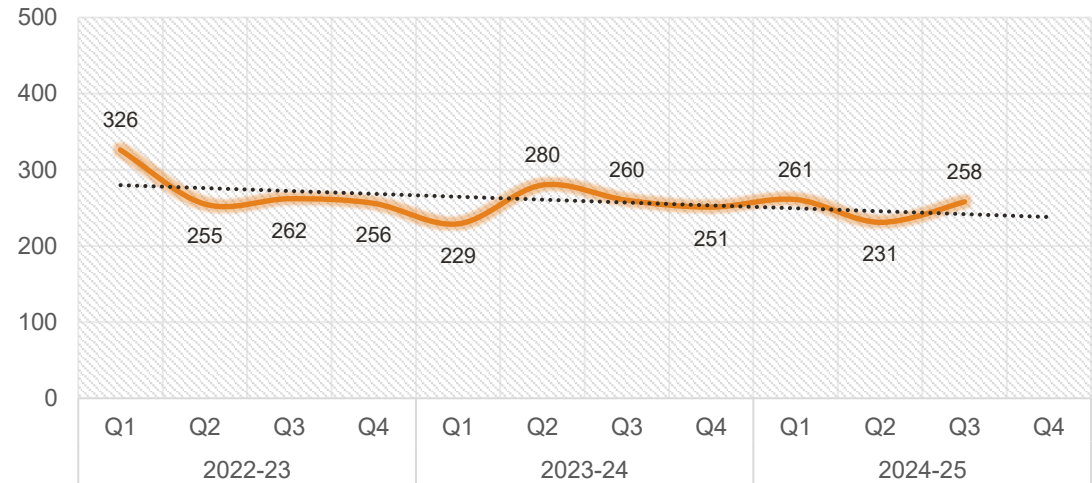
The data on this page outlines the number of food safety cases (complaints, enquiries, and notifications) received by the service and the number of food safety interventions undertaken at premises included in the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme. Complaints handled by WRS relate to food products and premises, however, complaints regarding the composition and labelling of food (including allergen labelling) are primarily investigated by Trading Standards. Enquiries handled by the WRS include requests for business advice, requests for hygiene ratings, and requests for export health certificates which are required by businesses seeking to export food to Northern Ireland, the European Union, and non-EU countries.

## Comments

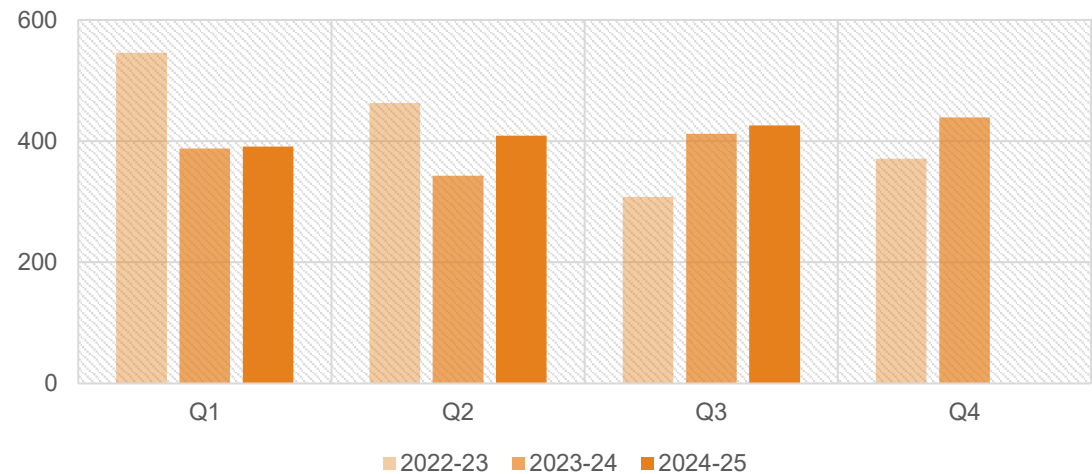
The number of cases received between 1st April 2024 and 31st December 2024 is a reduction of 11% compared to 2022/23 and a reduction of 2% compared to 2023/24. The service tends to receive a greater number of enquiries (including requests for business advice) than complaints. Based on the 357 complaints received during the year to date, 69% have related to issues with food products (such as poor quality food or food containing a foreign object) whilst 31% have related to poor hygiene standards or practices at food businesses.

Based on the 1,394 interventions undertaken during the year to date, 3% have resulted in a business being rated as "non-compliant" (issued a rating of 0, 1, or 2). A higher proportion of non-compliant ratings continue to be issued to the takeaway sector, pubs, and small retailers. To find out more about food hygiene ratings, please visit <https://ratings.food.gov.uk>.

## Complaints and Enquiries



## FHRS Interventions



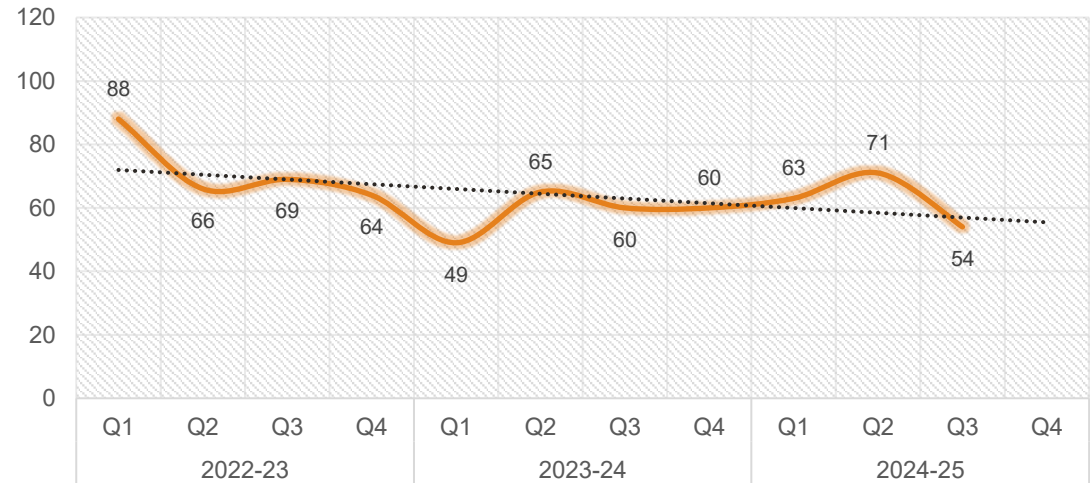
# Health & Safety

The data on this page outlines the number of health and safety cases (complaints, enquiries, and reports of accidents in the workplace) received by the service. Investigations are only undertaken by WRS where they relate to premises such as retail outlets, offices, leisure services, hospitality premises, and cosmetology premises. Other premises, such as factories and medical premises, fall with the remit of the Health and Safety Executive.

## Comments

The number of cases received between 1st April 2024 and 31st December 2024 is a reduction of 11% compared to 2022/23 but an increase of 4% compared to 2023/24. Approximately 45% of cases have been reports of accidents in workplaces with most cases relating to injuries where a worker was incapacitated for more than seven days or injuries to members of the public. The most common cause of accidents continues to be slips, trips and falls (whether on the same level or from height). Sadly, the service has investigated fatality during the current year after a contractor working at a retail outlet was crushed by a piece of mechanical equipment.

## Complaints and Enquiries

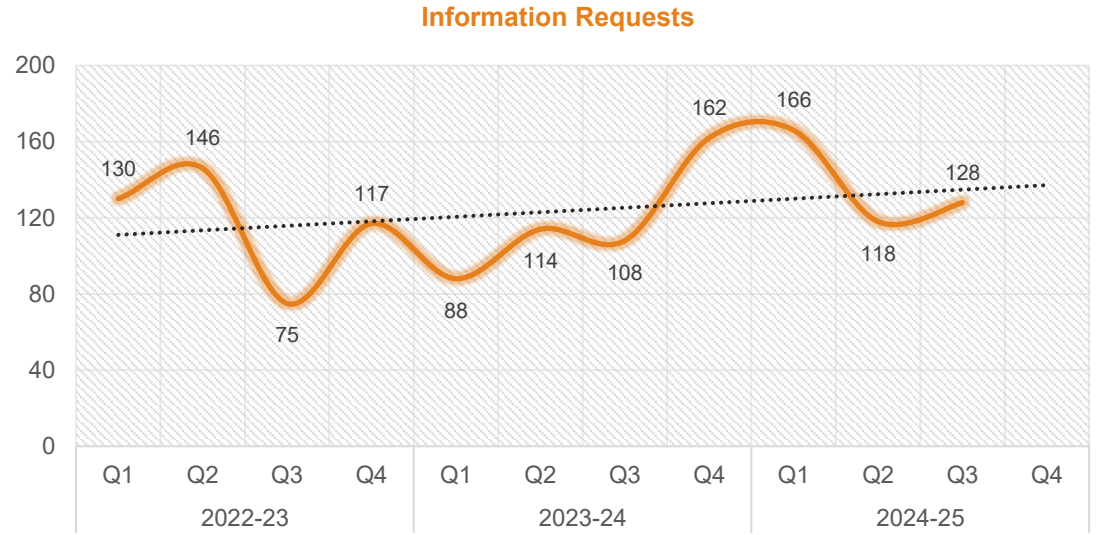


## Accident Reports



# Information Requests

The data on this page outlines the number of information requests received by the service. Requests for information are generally received from the public, or private sector companies, and are made under the Environmental Information Regulations, Freedom of Information Act, or General Data Protection Regulations (commonly known as Subject Access Requests). Requests for information are also received from other local authorities or law enforcement agencies and are made under the Data Protection Act (for the prevention and detection of crime or in connection with legal proceedings).



# Licensing

The data on this page outlines the number of licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications, and registrations) received by the service. Complaints handled by WRS can relate to licenced and unlicensed activitiy, however, cases generally relate to the following areas:

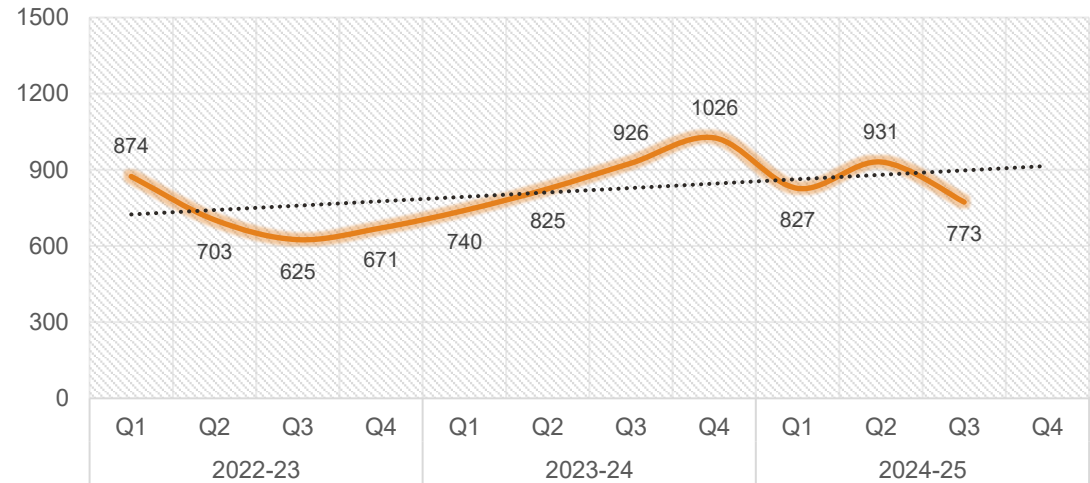
- Alcohol and Entertainment
- Animals
- Caravans
- Gambling
- Scrap Metal
- Sex Establishments
- Skin Piercing
- Street Trading, Amenities, and Collections
- Taxis

## Comments

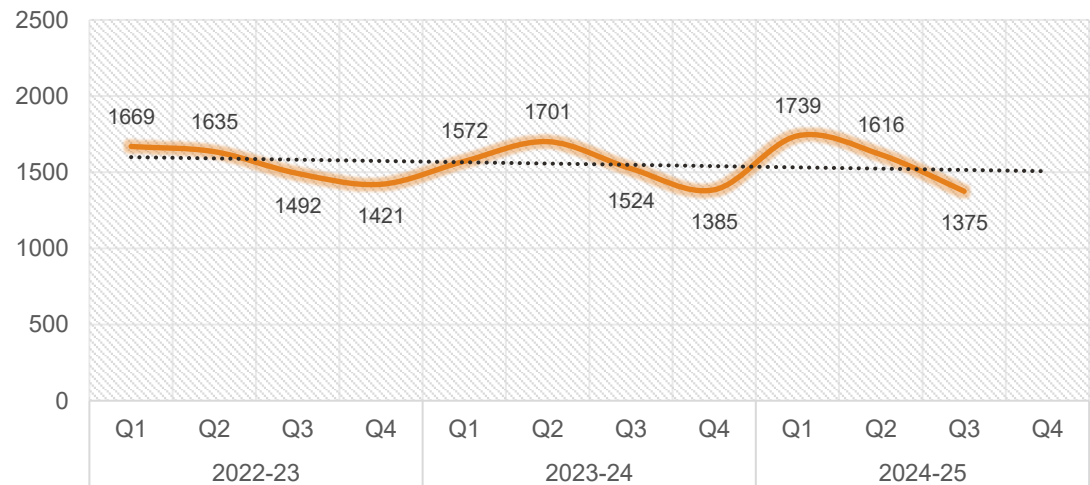
The number of cases received between 1st April 2024 and 31st December 2024 is an increase of 4% compared to 2022/23 but is consistnet with 2023/24. Approximately 65% of cases have been applications and registrations with 30% relating to private hire or hackney carriage vehicles and 27% relating to temporary events.

In general terms, the service receives a higher number of enquiries (such as queries about regulations, by-laws, and licence conditions) compared to complaints. Based on the complaints received during the year to date, approximately 41% have related to taxi licensing (such as reports of poor driver behaviour, unauthorised parking, or poor driving standards) and 17% have related to alcohol licensing (businesss breaching the lciensing objectives). A further 10% of complaints have related to animal licensing with most cases relating to the unlicensed breeding and/or sale of dogs.

## Complaints and Enquiries



## Applications and Registrations



# Planning

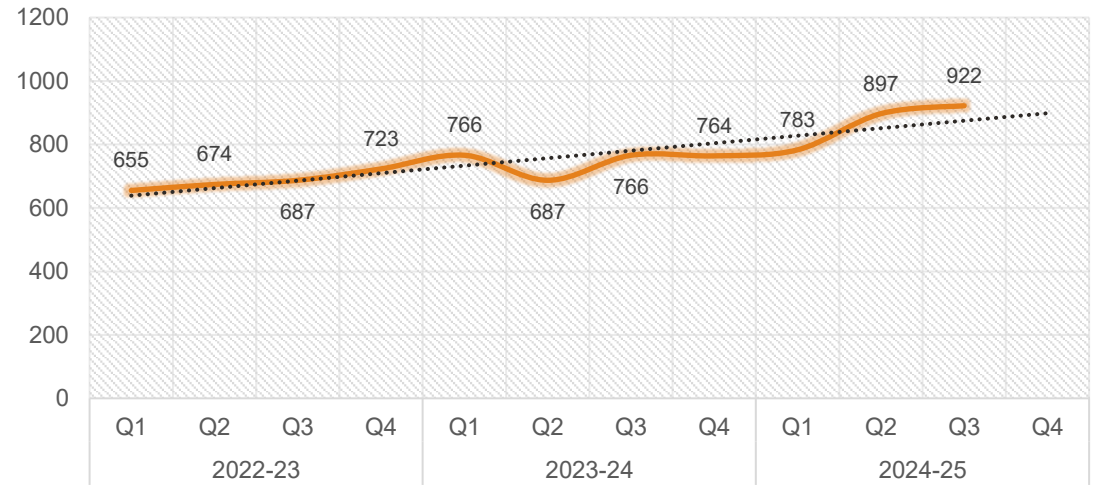
The data on this page outlines the number of planning enquiries received by the service. Planning enquiries processed by WRS are either consultations or requests to discharge planning conditions, however, enquiries only relate to the following areas:

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

## Comments

The number of cases received between 1st April 2024 and 31st December 2024 is an increase of 29% compared to 2022/23 and an increase of 18% compared to 2023/24. Approximately 89% of enquiries have been consultations for air quality, contaminated land, or nuisances; whilst 1 in 4 enquiries are now processed (on a contractual basis) on behalf of other local authorities.

## Planning Enquiries



# Planning Enforcement & Enviro-Crime

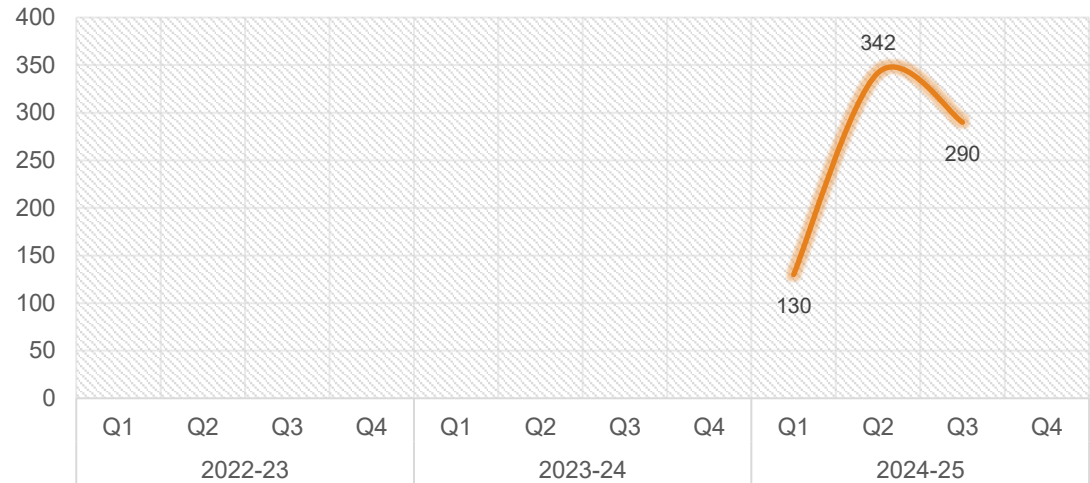
The data on this page shows the number of planning enforcement and environmental crime cases (complaints and enquiries) received by the service. Complaints handled by WRS include reports of fly-tipping, littering, and planning breaches at residential or commercial premises. The planning enforcement and environmental crime functions are only delivered on behalf of Bromsgrove and Redditch Councils and have only been within the remit of the service since June 2024.

## Comments

There is currently no comparable temporal data available for the planning enforcement and enviro-crime functions. Based on the 762 cases investigated during the year to date, 68% have related to fly-tipping whilst 19% have related to planning breaches at residential properties.

As this is a new service area for WRS, processes and priorities continue to be adapted however there are a number of priority work areas which include: enforcement of fly-tipping hotspots, clearing a backlog of legacy planning enforcement cases, and streamlining and standardising the approach to tackling untidy land cases. As can be seen from the graph, whilst WRS did assist Bromsgrove and Redditch informally with Planning Enforcement and some Envirocrime cases in Q1, complaint numbers rose significantly in Q2 as WRS formally took over the subject matters on 1st June 2024. The fall in numbers relates to a seasonal reduction in the number of fly tipping incidents (and therefore investigations) but also due to the number of 'legacy' cases that were passed over in June.

Complaints and Enquiries





# Pollution

The data on this page outlines the number of pollution cases (complaints and enquiries) received by the service. Complaints handled by WRS include reports of nuisances (noise, light, odour, smoke) originating from domestic, commercial, or agricultural activity and notifications of contamination incidents.

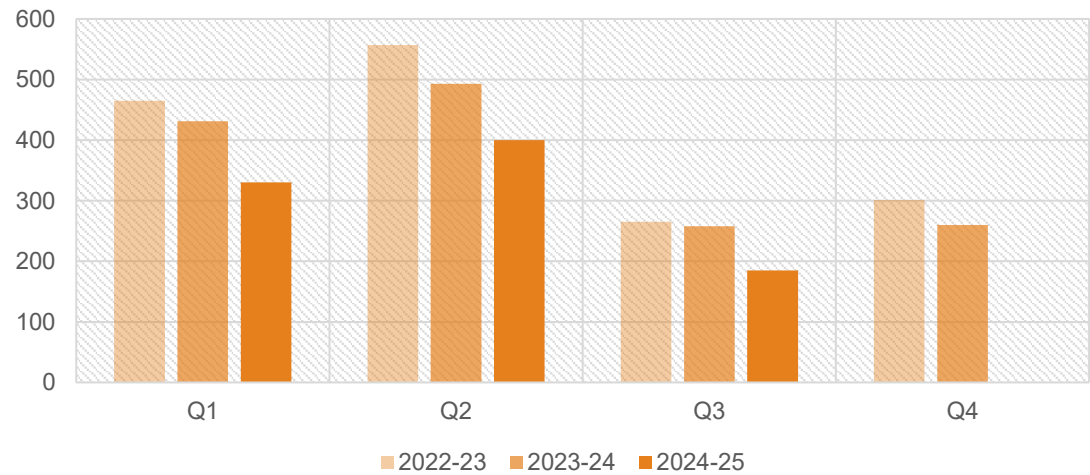
## Comments

The number of cases received between 1st April 2024 and 31st December 2024 is a reduction of 29% compared to 2022/23 and a reduction of 22% compared to 2023/24. Approximately 90% of cases have been reports of nuisances with around 43% of cases relating to noise from domestic properties (such as noise from barking dogs or noise from loud music). Other prominent nuisances commonly include noise from hospitality businesses, smoke from the burning of domestic or commercial waste, and dust from construction sites.

### Complaints and Enquiries



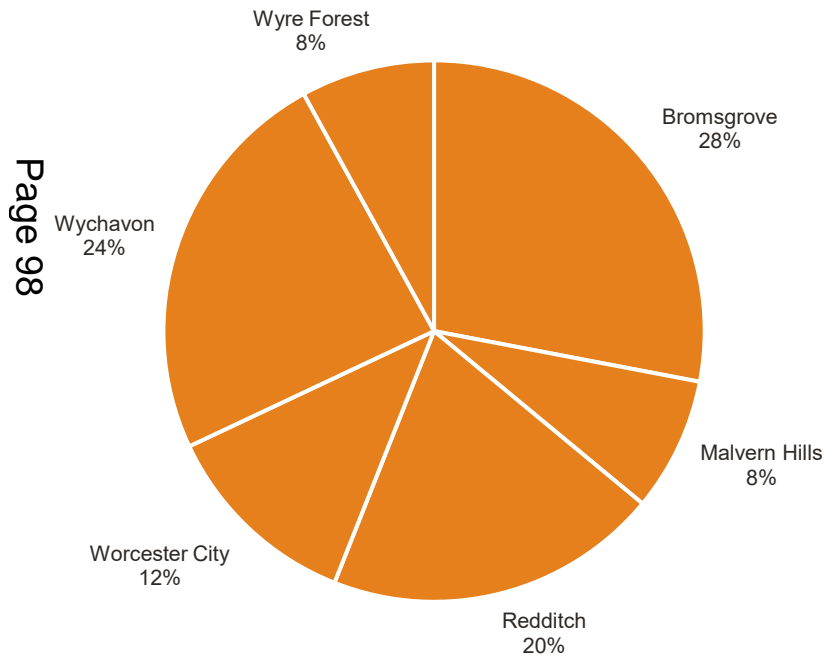
### Complaints and Enquiries (Noise Only)



# Noise

The data on this page outlines the wards in Worcestershire which have the highest case rate in terms of noise pollution. It also shows the districts in which these wards are located.

Note: The figures in the table are cumulative and will continue to increase until the end of year report is published in April 2025. Where a ward is highlighted, it was also one of the top 10 wards featured in the 2023/24 Activity Report.



Ward	Total	Population	Rate
Barnt Green And Hopwood	13	2,951	4.41
Avoncroft	14	3,451	4.06
Cathedral	40	11,760	3.40
Warndon	16	5,661	2.83
Honeybourne And Pebworth	8	2,844	2.81
Hallow	5	1,941	2.58
Perryfields	4	1,557	2.57
Lowes Hill	6	2,854	2.10
Winyates	16	8,139	1.97
Alvechurch South	6	3,105	1.93
Droitwich Central	5	2,621	1.91
Drakes Cross	6	3,202	1.87
Priory	8	4,384	1.82
Arboretum	11	6,130	1.79
Dodderhill	5	2,809	1.78
Bewdley And Rock	15	8,457	1.77
Central (Redditch)	12	6,841	1.75
Blakebrook And Habberley South	16	9,350	1.71
Rock Hill	5	2,970	1.68
Batchley And Brockhill	15	8,930	1.68
Great Hampton	6	3,677	1.63
Omersley	4	2,459	1.63
Lodge Park	9	5,619	1.60
Greenlands	15	9,462	1.59
Hartlebury	5	3,214	1.56

# Public Health

The data on this page outlines the number of public health cases (complaints and enquiries) received by the service and the number of subsidised treatments carried out by contractors. Complaints handled by WRS include reports of accumulations and reports of pest due to the activities of local residents or businesses. Pest control treatments are offered by five of the districts, however, Wyre Forest District Council does not offer a subsidised pest control service.

## Comments

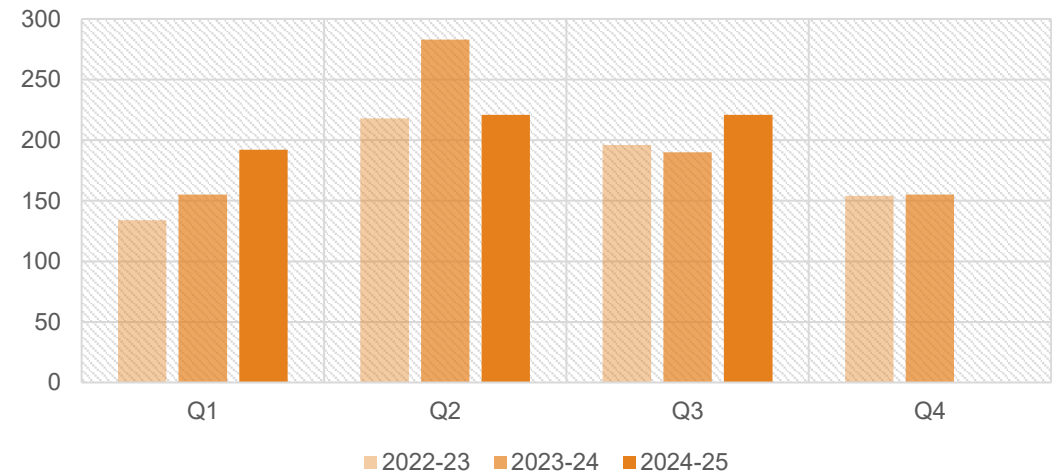
The number of cases received between 1st April 2024 and 31st December 2024 is an increase of 4% compared to 2022/23 but a reduction of 4% compared to 2023/24. Approximately 62% of cases have related to pest control such as enquiries about domestic treatments, enquiries about sewer baiting, or complaints about pest activity caused by the actions of neighbouring residents or businesses. A further 24% of cases have related to accumulations at residential properties, however, such complaints often reference the presence of rodents or other pests.

Based on the 634 domestic treatments undertaken by pest control contractors during the year to date, 59% were due to issues with rodents whilst 35% have taken place at properties in the Redditch district.

Complaints and Enquiries



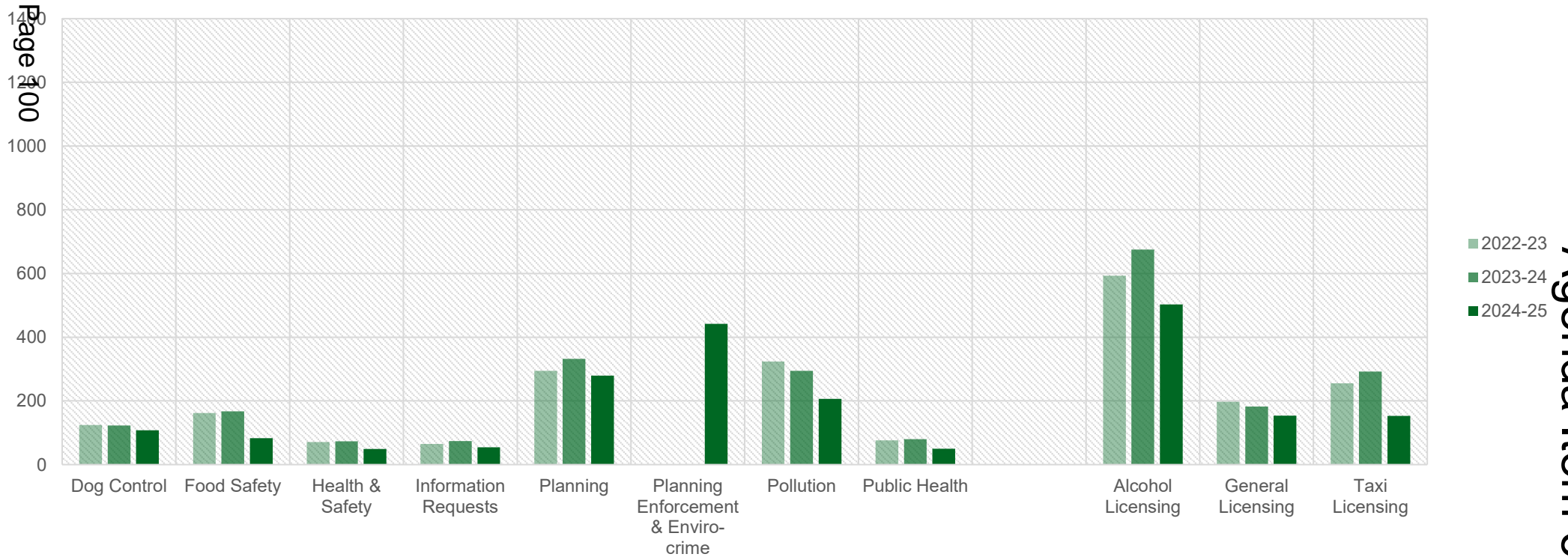
Domestic Subsidised Treatments



The data on this page outlines the number of Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications) received by WRS where the subject or enquirer were located in the Bromsgrove district.

Note: The chart below provides a breakdown of cases by the primary functions undertaken by the service. The recent increase in cases can be attributed to the additional functions (enviro-crime and planning enforcement) now being delivered by the service. The figures for the current year are cumulative and will continue to increase until the end of year report is published in April 2025. The Y axis on this chart has also been standardised so the level of demand received against each function can be broadly compared to other districts.

## Bromsgrove District Council

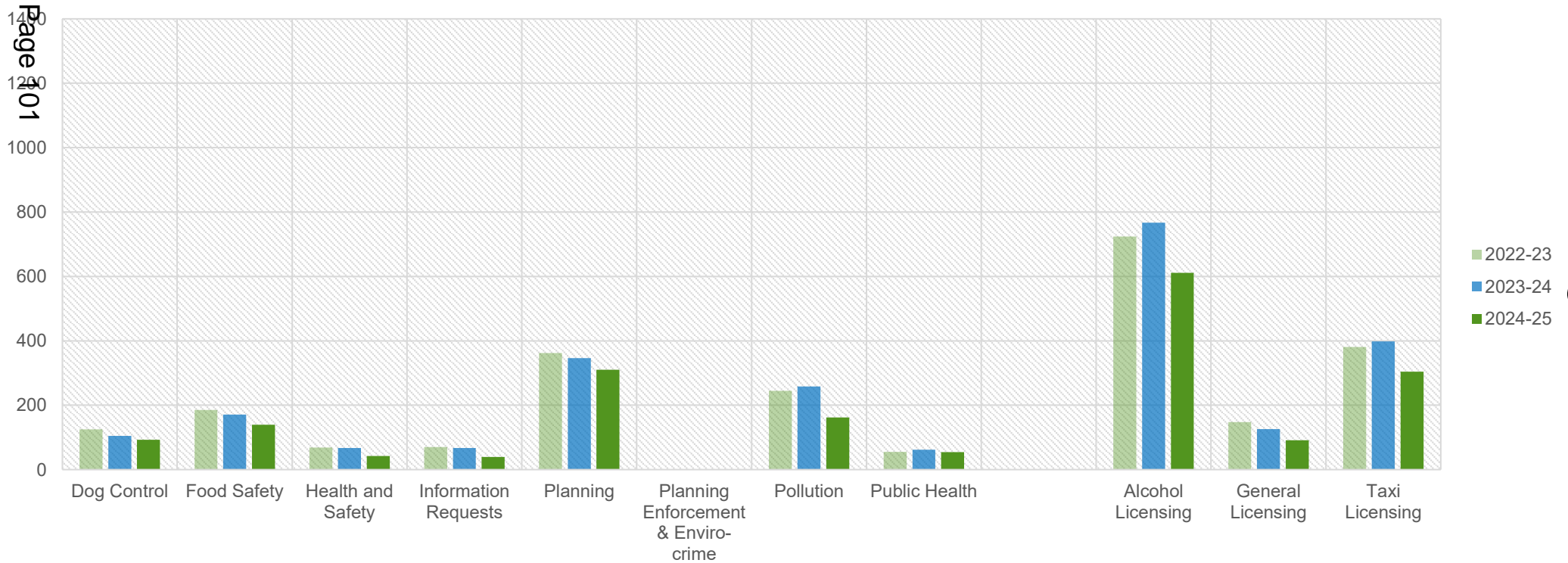
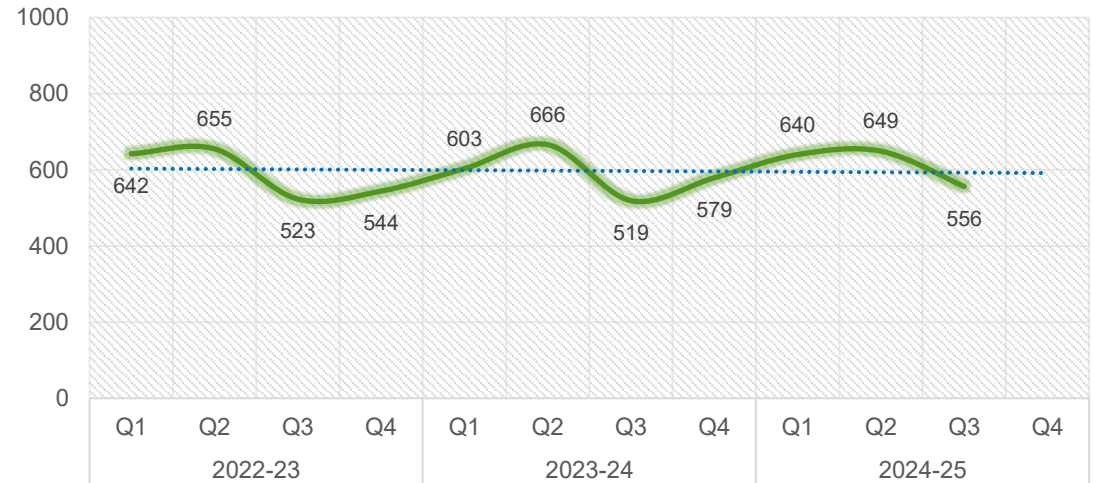


# Malvern Hills

The data on this page outlines the number of Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications) received by WRS where the subject or enquirer were located in the Malvern Hills district.

Note: The chart below provides a breakdown of cases by the primary functions undertaken by the service. The figures for the current year are cumulative and will continue to increase until the end of year report is published in April 2025. The Y axis on this chart has also been standardised so the level of demand received against each function can be broadly compared to other districts.

## Malvern Hills District Council



# Redditch

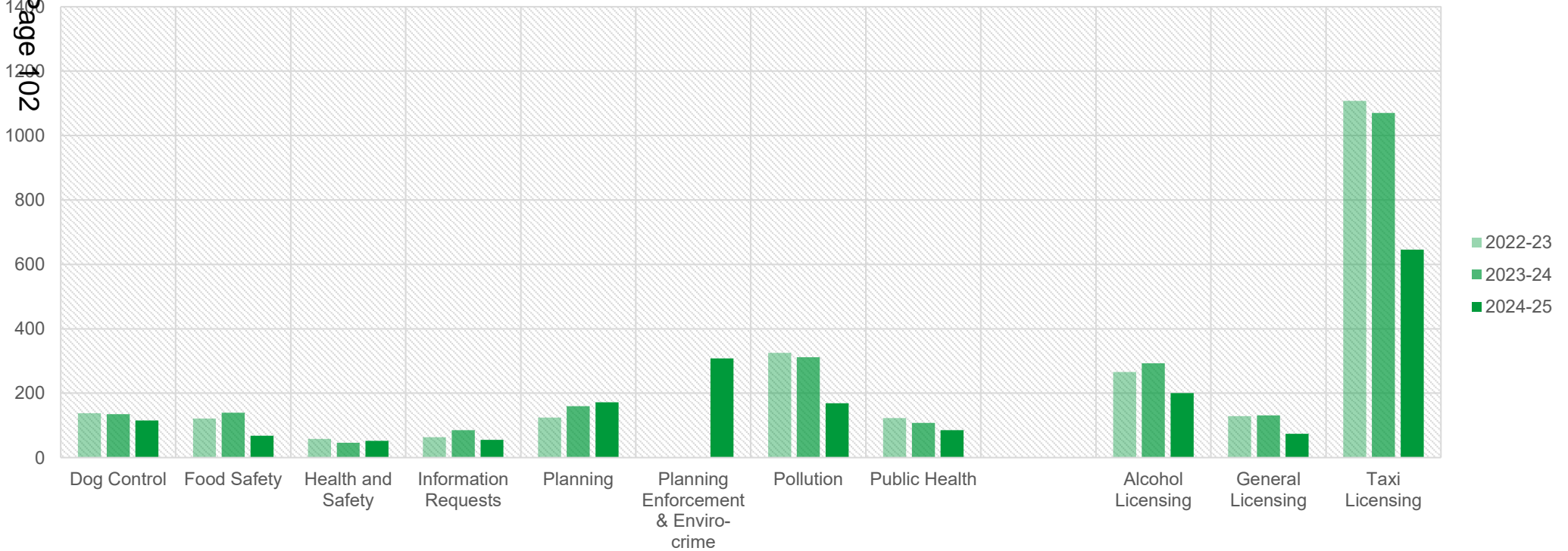
The data on this page outlines the number of Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications) received by WRS where the subject or enquirer were located in the Redditch district.

Note: The chart below provides a breakdown of cases by the primary functions undertaken by the service. The recent increase in cases can be attributed to the additional functions (enviro-crime and planning enforcement) now being delivered by the service. The figures for the current year are cumulative and will continue to increase until the end of year report is published in April 2025. The Y axis on this chart has also been standardised so the level of demand received against each function can be broadly compared to other districts.

## Redditch Borough Council



Page 102



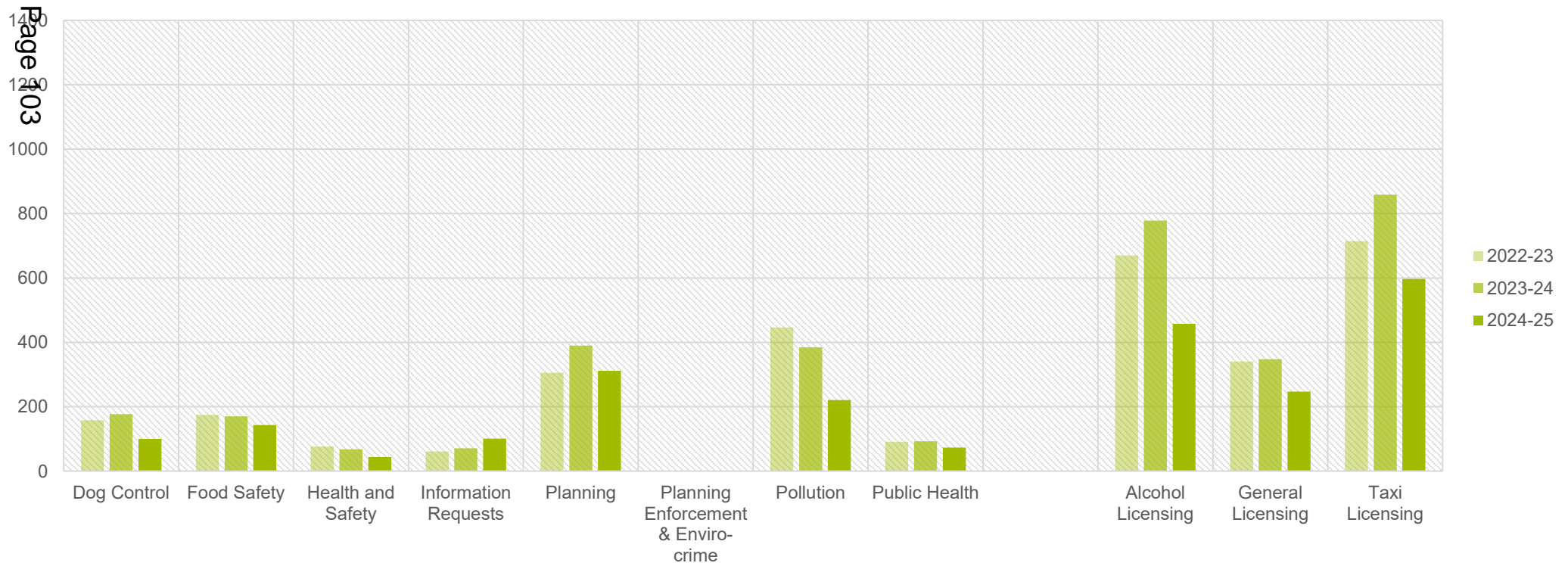
Agenda Item 6

# Worcester City

The data on this page outlines the number of Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications) received by WRS where the subject or enquirer were located in the Worcester City district.

Note: The chart below provides a breakdown of cases by the primary functions undertaken by the service. The figures for the current year are cumulative and will continue to increase until the end of year report is published in April 2025. The Y axis on this chart has also been standardised so the level of demand received against each function can be broadly compared to other districts.

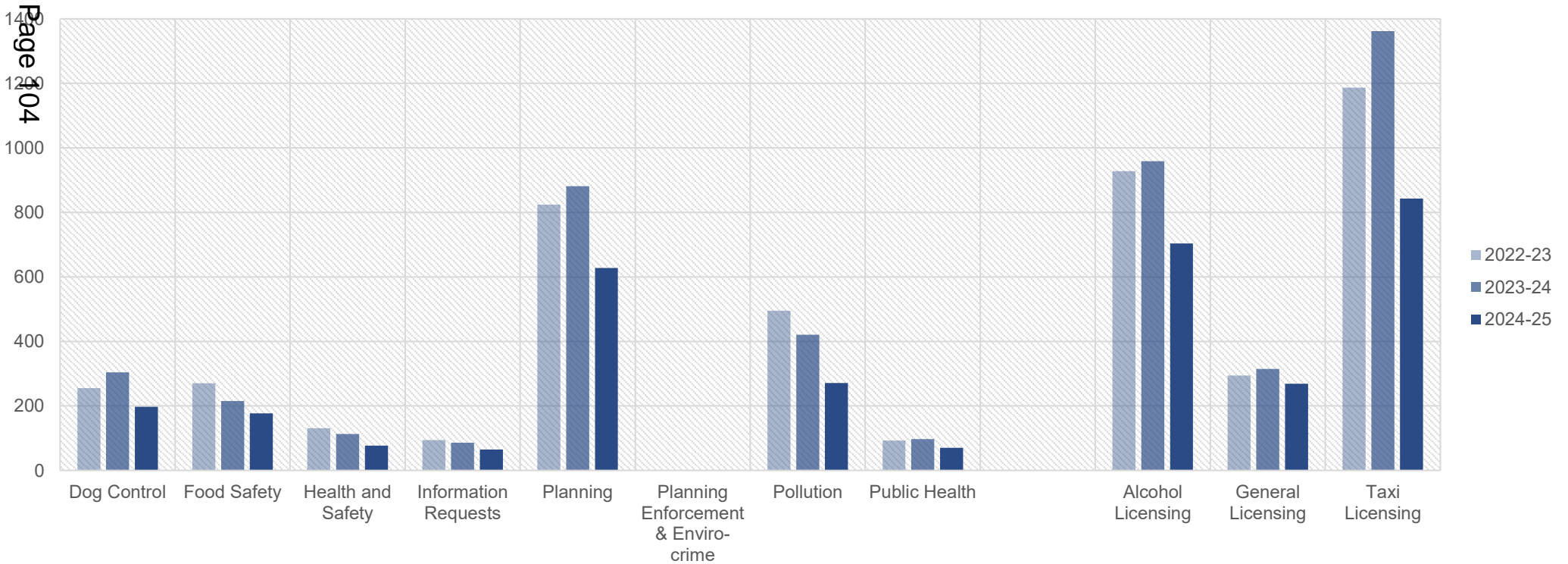
## Worcester City Council



The data on this page outlines the number of Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications) received by WRS where the subject or enquirer were located in the Wychavon district.

Note: The chart below provides a breakdown of cases by the primary functions undertaken by the service. The figures for the current year are cumulative and will continue to increase until the end of year report is published in April 2025. The Y axis on this chart has also been standardised so the level of demand received against each function can be broadly compared to other districts.

## Wychavon District Council



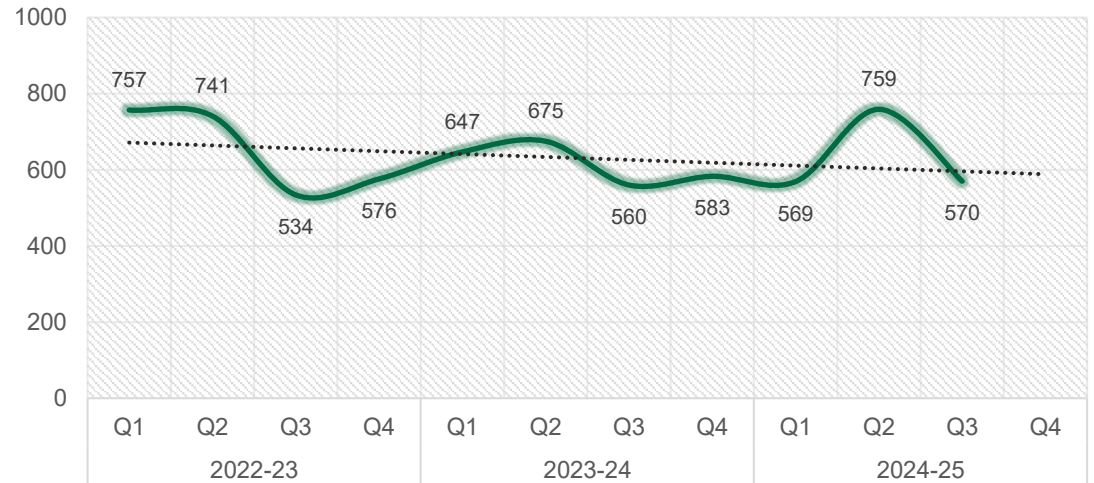


# Wyre Forest

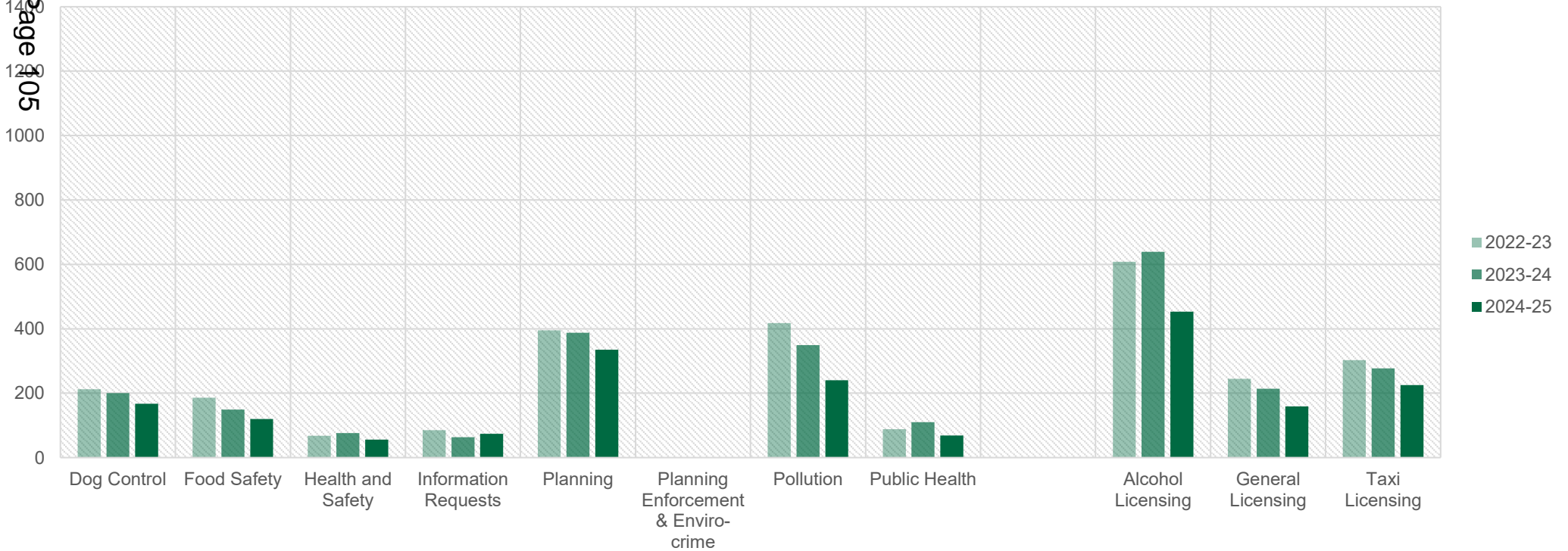
The data on this page outlines the number of Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications) received by WRS where the subject or enquirer were located in the Wyre Forest district.

Note: The chart below provides a breakdown of cases by the primary functions undertaken by the service. The figures for the current year are cumulative and will continue to increase until the end of year report is published in April 2025. The Y axis on this chart has also been standardised so the level of demand received against each function can be broadly compared to other districts.

## Wyre Forest District Council



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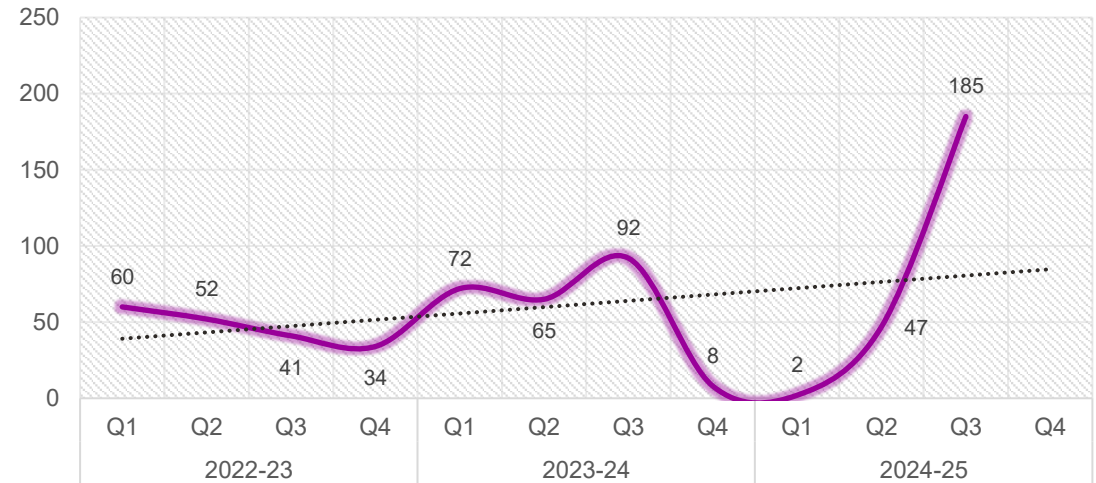
# Birmingham City

The data on this page outlines the number of planning enquiries processed by the service on behalf of Birmingham City Council.

We currently, and historically, have only ever provided services in relation to dog control. We commenced provision of an out of hours stray dog kennelling, reuniting with owners and rehoming of unwanted stray dog service which continued until Q1 2022-23 with finders dropping off dogs out of hours which they had found. Unfortunately we lost the use of the kennels we were primarily using to service this contract and, as a result, changed the contract delivery to include collection of stray dogs. This increased the number of dogs received, kennelled and rehomed, reducing the number of dogs Birmingham City might see as strays in the future. In Q4 2023-24, the out of hours contract arrangements with Birmingham ceased with assistance being provided on an ad hoc basis only until a new contract for kennelling of all Birmingham stray dogs commenced.

The new contract arrangement which started on 1st September this year includes the receipt of stray dogs (deposited by Birmingham City Dog Wardens) to our kennelling facilities, where we facilitate reunification, rehoming or where a banned or dangerous dog, arrange euthanasia. We envisage there to be in excess of 1200 stray dogs a year received through this contract.

Birmingham City Council



# Cheltenham

The data on this page outlines the number of dog control cases (reports of lost or stray dogs) handled by the service on behalf of Cheltenham Borough Council.

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

Cheltenham Borough Council



# Gloucester City

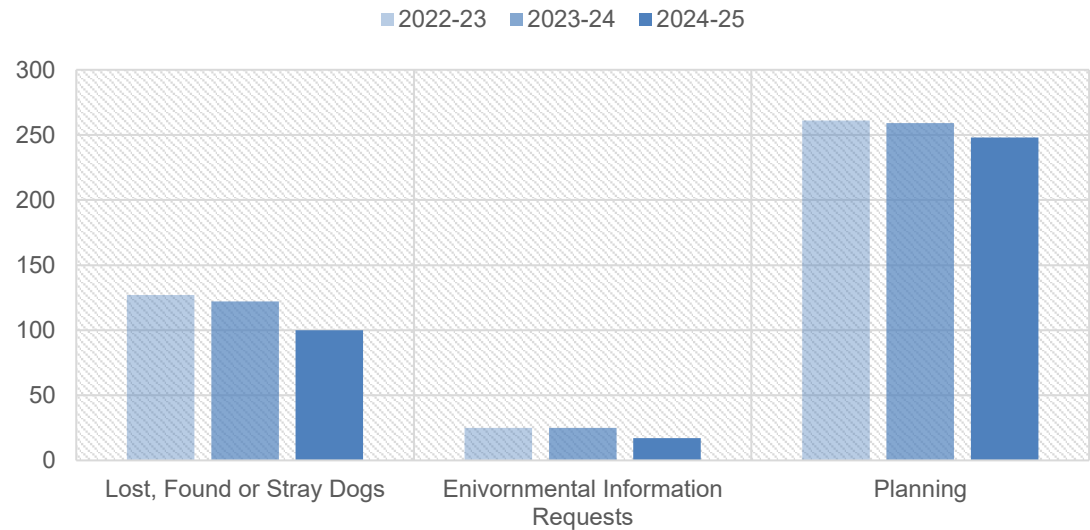
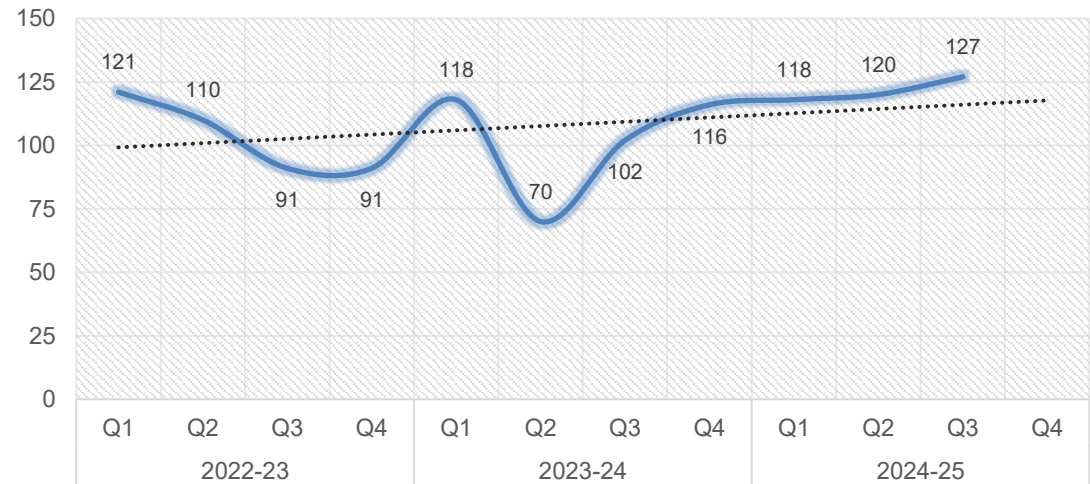
The data on this page outlines the number of dog control cases (reports of lost or stray dogs), environmental information requests, and planning enquiries handled by the service on behalf of Gloucester City Council.

The dog control work undertaken for the authority is part of a contract with two other Gloucestershire authorities to deliver the collection, kennelling, returning of dogs to owners, and rehoming of stray dog functions. The contract was recently renewed and has been highly successful in reducing stray dog numbers for Gloucester City Council as well as utilising existing WRS resource and expertise. Such arrangements enable economies of scale to be realised and the continued retention of valuable assets to the benefit of Partner Authorities. The numbers of stray dogs are reducing annually, however, this is being closely monitored as the numbers are plateauing and there have been recent increases in the number of abandoned strays in other areas due to the cost of living crisis and post-COVID behaviour changes.

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

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Gloucester City Council



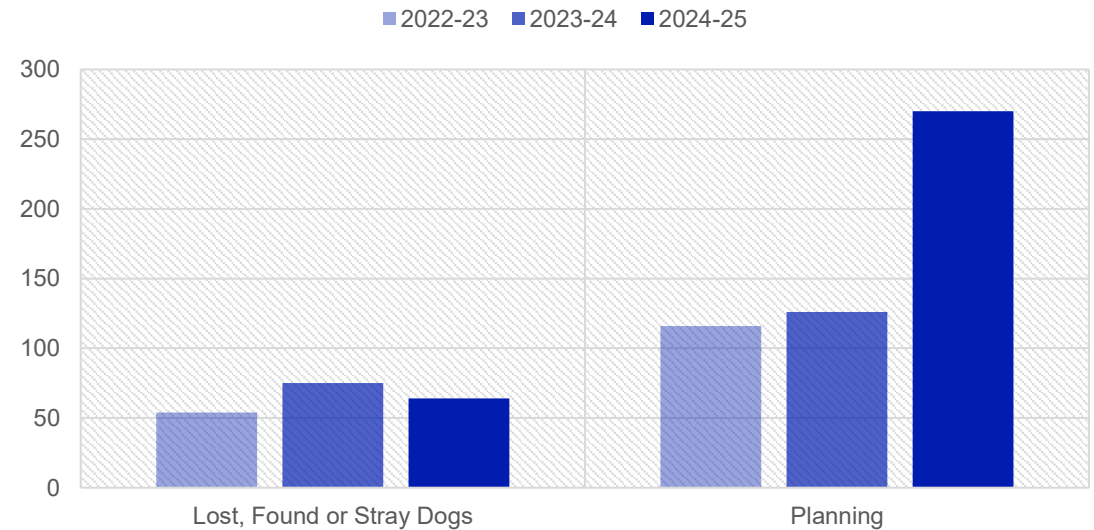
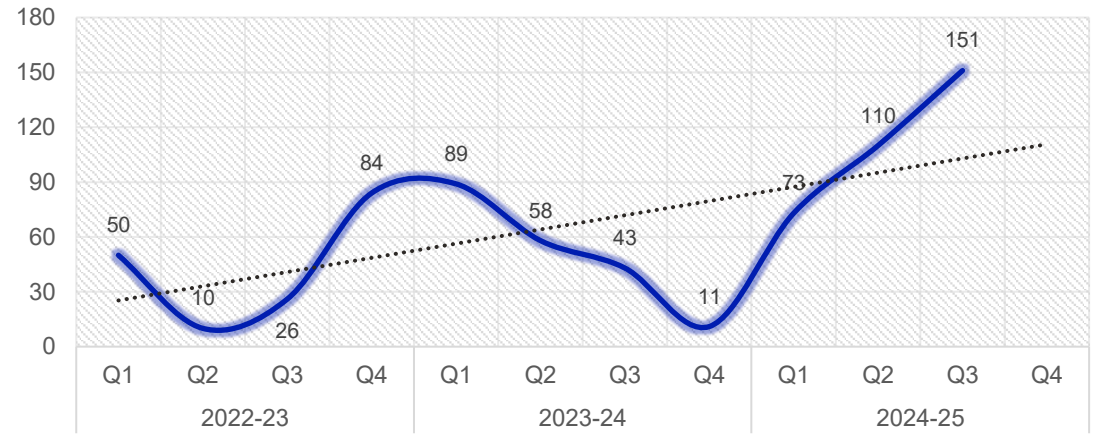
# Tewkesbury

The data on this page outlines the number of dog control cases (reports of lost or stray dogs), and planning enquiries handled by the service on behalf of Tewkesbury Borough Council.

The dog control work undertaken for the authority is part of a contract with two other Gloucestershire authorities to deliver the collection, kennelling, returning of dogs to owners, and rehoming of stray dog functions. The contract was recently renewed and has been highly successful in reducing stray dog numbers for Tewkesbury Borough Council as well as utilising existing WRS resource and expertise. Such arrangements enable economies of scale to be realised and the continued retention of valuable assets to the benefit of Partner Authorities. As with other Gloucestershire and Worcestershire authorities, the numbers of stray dogs are reducing annually, however, this is being closely monitored as there have been recent increases in the number of abandoned strays in other areas due to the cost of living crisis and post-COVID behaviour changes.

In addition to dog control activity, the service has recommenced the provision of advice to Planning Officers on nuisance and air quality matters, following cessation of the service in Q4 2023-24 following a successful recruitment campaign.

## Tewkesbury Borough Council



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## WRS Board

Date: 21 February 2025

### Progress Report on the Automation Project

**Recommendation** | Members are asked to note the report.

**Background**

Officers continue to work on the Automation Project since the agreement by Board members in 2023 to create a reserve of £150,000 from the previous year's underspend to fund the implementation of automation of data entry for customers. This would enable a range of services across WRS to be addressed by the customer entering data onto forms on the WRS website, which would then upload directly into the IDOX Uniform back-office system used across the service. Subsequently this will also include the automation of payments for Licensing, so our host authority Bromsgrove District Council will collect fees for the 6 partners and pass money back to the other 5. Officers agreed to provide a short progress report at each Board meeting between then and the actual implementation of the project.

**Report**

**Temporary Events Notice (TEN) Form Update**

The Temporary Events Notice form went live for all 6 districts in Worcestershire in September 2024 and the team have continued to monitoring progress closely since its launch. The shift to moving online has continued to rise with very few queries or challenges. The numbers in the tables below illustrate the uptake overall and per council.

**Total numbers by month**

Month	VF Form	Non-VF	Total	Percent VF
2024 09	18	28	46	39%
2024 10	93	63	156	60%
2024 11	179	18	197	91%
2024 12	46	8	54	85%
2025 01	71	17	88	81%
2025 02	23	3	26	88%

**Percentage of TENs submitted by VF by month to date, by district**

	2024 09	2024 10	2024 11	2024 12	2025 01	2025 02
<b>BDC</b>	11%	44%	83%	80%	72%	100%
<b>MHDC</b>		68%	89%	92%	82%	100%
<b>RBC</b>	100%	71%	100%	100%	100%	
<b>WCC</b>		48%	96%	78%	100%	75%
<b>WDC</b>	25%	69%	98%	83%	86%	89%
<b>WFDC</b>	100%	53%	77%	83%	50%	75%



## Form Timeline

The following forms are complete and all in the final testing stages ready to launch.

1. Personal Licence Applications
2. Premises Licence Applications
  - Application to vary a premises license
  - Application to vary a DPS
  - Application form to transfer a premises licence

The next set of forms to be created and tested are as follows:

3. Animal Licensing Applications
4. Pavement Licensing
5. Taxi Applications

Whilst the animal licensing and pavement licensing forms are being created the team will look to form a plan of engagement with the taxi trade as we would like to do as much testing with the trade and operators to ensure there are champions in each district. The formulation of the guidance and faq's on the website will be critical to ensure a smooth transition therefore engaging with this group will be critical.

Significant progress has been made on the 'service request' form where the task and finish group are comfortable now to move onto testing. It has been a challenge to scope out by the teams involved as it has required the need to address a very wide range of potential requests relating to the work of all three WRS service areas. It has also required members across WRS teams to get together at various points of the scoping exercise.

## Taxi ID Cards

The three teams involved in the project (MyTAG, IDOX and Wyre Forest IT) are working together to ensure there is no risk to the service when data is exposed outside of the environment when enabling remote access to the IDOX database. Although these cards have been used by other public sector services such as the NHS and the police they have not been used by any other local authority in the country so there needs to be assurances that this can be delivered with no risk to the councils services.

## Contact Point

Kiran Lahel  
Licensing and Support Services Manager  
Email: [kiran.lahel@worcsregservices.gov.uk](mailto:kiran.lahel@worcsregservices.gov.uk)  
Tel: 01562 738067

