

WORCESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILS

MEETING OF THE WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES BOARD

THURSDAY 24TH JUNE 2021

AT 4.30 P.M.

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

MEMBERS: Bromsgrove District Council: Councillor H. J. Jones
Bromsgrove District Council: Councillor A. D. Kent
Malvern Hills District Council: Councillor J. Raine
Malvern Hills District Council: Councillor T. Wells
Redditch Borough Council: Councillor A. Fry
Redditch Borough Council: Councillor N. Nazir
Worcester City Council: Councillor J. Carver
Worcester City Council: Councillor R. Udall
Wychavon District Council: Councillor D. Morris
Wychavon District Council: Councillor E. Stokes
Wyre Forest District Council: Councillor P. Dyke
Wyre Forest District Council: Councillor N. Martin

AGENDA

1. Election of Chairman
2. Election of Vice-Chairman
3. Apologies for absence and notification of substitutes
4. 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.
5. To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board held on 11th February 2021 (Pages 1 - 14)
6. Chairman of the Board 2020-2021 - Review Report (Pages 15 - 18)
7. Information Report - Food Safety Recovery Plan June 2021 (Pages 19 - 24)
8. Worcestershire Regulatory Services Annual Report 2020/2021 (Pages 25 - 72)

9. Worcestershire Regulatory Services Revenue Monitoring April - March 2021 and Annual Return 2021/2022 (Pages 73 - 86)
10. Worcestershire Regulatory Services Activity and Performance Data - Quarters 1 to 4, 2020/2021 (Pages 87 - 130)
11. 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.

K. DICKS
Chief Executive

Parkside
Market Street
BROMSGROVE
Worcestershire
B61 8DA

16th June 2021

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

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GUIDANCE ON FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS

Due to the current Covid-19 pandemic Bromsgrove District Council will be holding this meeting in accordance with the relevant social distancing arrangements for holding face-to-face meetings at a local authority.

Please note that this is a public meeting.

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

GUIDANCE FOR ELECTED MEMBERS ATTENDING MEETINGS IN PERSON

In advance of the Board meeting, Members are encouraged to consider taking a lateral flow test, which can be obtained for free from the NHS website. Should the test be positive for Covid-19 then the Member should not attend the meeting, should provide their apologies to the Democratic Services Officer and should self-isolate in accordance with national rules.

Members and officers are encouraged to wear face masks during the meeting, unless exempt. Face masks should only be removed temporarily if the Councillor/ officer requires a sip of water and should be reapplied as soon as possible. Refreshments will not be provided, therefore Members and officers are encouraged to bring your own supply of water.

Hand sanitiser will be provided.

The meeting venue will be fully ventilated and Members and officers may need to consider wearing appropriate clothing in order to remain comfortable during proceedings.

Members of the public will still be able to access the meeting in person if they wish to do so. However, due to social distancing requirements to ensure the safety of participants during the Covid-19 pandemic there will be limited capacity and members of the public will be allowed access on a first come, first served basis. Members of the public in attendance are encouraged to wear face-masks, to use the hand sanitiser that will be provided and will be required to sit in a socially distanced manner at the meeting. It should be

noted that members of the public who choose to attend in person do so at their own risk.

In line with Government guidelines, any member of the public who has received a positive result in a Covid-19 test on the day of a meeting should not attend in person and should self-isolate in accordance with the national rules.

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 Regulatory Services Board
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WORCESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILS

VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES BOARD

THURSDAY, 11TH FEBRUARY 2021, AT 4.33 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors H. Dyke (Chairman, during Minute No's 31/20 to part of 38/20), J. Squires (Vice-Chairman in the Chair for part of Minute No. 38/20), A. D. Kent, H. J. Jones, J. Raine, T. Wells, N. Nazir, M. Johnson, E. Stokes, D. Morris and P. Dyke

Officers: Mr. S. Wilkes, Ms. C. Flanagan, Mr. D. Mellors, Mr. M. Cox, Ms. K. Lahel, Mr. C. Forrester, Ms. K. Goldey, Mrs. P. Ross and Ms. K. Somers

Partner Officers: Mr. L. Griffiths, Worcester City Council, Mr. P. Merrick, Malvern Hills District Council and Wychavon District Council and Mr. M. Parker, Wyre Forest District Council

31/20 **APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies for absence.

32/20 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

33/20 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board held on 19th November 2020, were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board meeting held on 19th November 2020, be approved as a correct record.

34/20 **WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES BUDGETS 2021/2022 - 2023/2024**

The Senior Business Support Accounting Technician, Bromsgrove District Council (BDC), introduced the report and in doing so drew Members' attention to the Recommendations as detailed on pages 17 and 18 of the main agenda report.

The Senior Business Support Accounting Technician, BDC further drew Members' attention to page 19 of the main agenda report. Whereby it

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was noted that, following further discussions with the Chief Executive, Wyre Forest District Council, the host for Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS), IT and accommodation providers; the Chief Executive had withdrawn their proposed £13k increase in charges for 2020/2021 and 2021/2022. Therefore, Members were being asked to approve the reduced revised budget.

The Senior Business Support Accounting Technician, BDC highlighted that the remainder of the budgets, as agreed by the Board at the meeting held on 19th November 2020, remained the same.

Appendix 1 to the report detailed the 2021/2022 – 2023/2024 budget breakdown for the district council's partners and the revised budget for 2020/2021.

Appendix 2 to the report detailed the partner contributions breakdown for 2021/2022 to 2023/2024.

The Head of Regulatory Services responded to a question with regard to Redditch Borough Council's (RBC) partner contributions, and in doing so explained that partner contributions were based on the original amount of funding that partners had put into the partnership in 2010, when the partnership was first formed.

A small exercise was carried out in 2013/2014 to look at revising the partner percentages against the workload created by each of the partner councils.

The only change was that RBC had spent slightly more on its Environmental Health and Licensing services. So, this was reflective of the historical contribution that RBC had always made.

The Head of Regulatory Services responded to a question with regards to Wyre Forest District Council removing the additional £13k increase in hosting WRS. Members were informed that further discussions had taken place with the Chief Executives of each of the partner authorities and that following those discussions the Chief Executive, Wyre Forest District Council had agreed to withdraw the additional £13k charges. However, this was on the assumption that the officer partners of the Board would meet during the summer to further discuss the cost of hosting all aspects of the service going forward.

The Head of Regulatory Services and the Technical Services Manager, Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS), responded to Members in respect of income generation, namely the three additional technical officers working on income generation and the Business and Relationship Manager vacant post.

The Technical Officer, WRS commented that the current Business and Relationship Manager's post had been kept vacant because of the ongoing situation with Covid-19. Some of those funds had been used

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for agency staff. Income generation had largely stayed the same, ongoing contracts had continued and there had been some surprising opportunities to bid for additional work outside of WRS's existing business relationships and significant contracts could be awarded this year. There were some opportunities that officers would be going for.

The Head of Regulatory Services further commented that he could not deal with the Business and Relationship Manager's post until he had finalised the Licensing and Support Services Manager's role. He was hoping to compete this within the next seven days. He would then look at the Business and Relationship Manager's role and if the original reasons for having that post remained the same of if there was a better way going forward.

RECOMMENDED that partner authorities approve the following for 2021/22 and 2023/24:

- 1.1 the 2021/22 gross expenditure budget of £3,726k as shown in Appendix 1.
- 1.2 the 2021/22 income budget of £529k as shown in Appendix 1.
- 1.3 the revenue budget and partner percentage allocations for 2021/22 onwards:

Council	£'000	Revised %
Bromsgrove District Council	466	14.59
Malvern Hills District Council	410	12.82
Redditch Borough Council	562	17.57
Worcester City Council	530	16.58
Wychavon District	745	23.29
Wyre Forest District Council	484	15.15
Total	3,197	

- 1.4 the additional partner liabilities for 2021/22 in relation to unavoidable salary pressure.

Bromsgrove District Council	£9k
Malvern Hills District Council	£8k
Redditch Borough Council	£10k

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Worcester City Council	£10k
Wychavon District Council	£14k
Wyre Forest District Council	£9k
Total	£60k

- 1.5 the additional partner liabilities for 2021/22 in relation to three Technical Officers.

Council	Tech Officer Income Generation £000	Tech Officer Animal Activity £000	Tech Officer Gull Control £000
Bromsgrove District Council	5	6	
Malvern Hills District Council	4	10	
Redditch Borough Council	6	2	
Worcester City Council	5	4	30
Wychavon District Council	7	9	
Wyre Forest District Council	5	5	
Total	32	36	30

35/20

WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES REVENUE MONITORING APRIL - DECEMBER 2020

The Senior Business Support Accounting Technician, Bromsgrove District Council (BDC), introduced the report and in doing so drew Members' attention to the Recommendations as detailed on pages 29 and 30 of the main agenda report.

The Senior Business Support Accounting Technician, BDC explained that the report covered the period April to December 2020, Quarter 3.

The detailed revenue report was attached at Appendix 1 to the report. The revised budget for 2020/2021 excluded the increase in ICT and rent at Wyre Forest District Council, as discussed during Agenda Item 4, (Minute No. 34/20). There was a projected outturn for 2020/2021 of £44k surplus.

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It was appreciated that this was an estimation to the year-end based on the following assumptions:-

- There were two vacant posts within the service, we have assumed no recruitment to either the Business & Relationship Manager and the Regulatory Apprentice for the current year.
- If April to December 2020 spend on pest control continued on the same trend for the rest of the year, there would be an overspend on this service of £14k.

Appendix 1 to the report detailed the WRS – Profit & Loss Report 2020/2021 showing an overall projected outturn of £88k surplus reducing to a £44k surplus by the year end.

The following variances were highlighted: -

- Savings due to employees working on the Local Outbreak Response Team.
- Reduction in car allowances, due to a change in working patterns with the current pandemic.
- Savings due to a reduction in dogs straying.

Appendix 2 to the report detailed the WRS Income for 2020/2021, Income from Partners, an additional income of £290k.

Councillor J. Squires, Worcester City Council queried the funding received from Public Health. Councillor Squires had noted that the report stated that, any grant funded expenditure was shown separate to the core service costs as this was not funded by the partnership. Where was the accountability for this funding?

The Head of Regulatory Services clarified that effectively Worcestershire County Council (WCC) had commissioned WRS to do a number of pieces of work, so from a financial probity situation, the responsibility for ensuring that the funds were spent well and obtained best value for money would sit with WCC and the Director of Public Health.

The governance of the expenditure fell with WCC.

Members agreed that they were happy with the explanation provided and would ask the Head of Regulatory Services to only provide the Board with further information should there be any future variances to his statement.

RESOLVED that

- a) the final financial position for the period April to December 2020, be noted,
- b) partner authorities be informed of their liabilities for 2020/2021 in

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relation to Bereavements as follows:-

Council	Apr-Dec Actual Bereavements £000	20 for
Redditch Borough Council	9	
Malvern Hills District Council	6	
Worcester City Council	10	
Bromsgrove District Council	5	
Total	30	

- c) partner authorities are informed of their liabilities for 2020/2021 in relation to Pest Control as follows:-

Council	Estimated Projected Outturn Recharge in Relation to Pest Control 2020/21 £000
Redditch Borough Council	7
Wychavon District Council	6
Bromsgrove District Council	1
Total	14

- d) partner authorities are informed of their liabilities for 2020/2021 in relation to three additional Technical Officers as follows:-

Council	Estimated Projected Outturn 2020/21 Tech Officer Income Generation £000	Estimated Projected Outturn 2020/21 Tech Officer Animal Activity £000	Estimated Projected Outturn 2020/21 Gull Control £000
Redditch Borough Council	2	2	
Malvern Hills District Council	1	8	

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Worcester City Council	2	3	35
Bromsgrove District Council	1	5	
Wychavon District Council	2	7	
Wyre Forest District Council	1	4	
Total	9	29	35

36/20

WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES, SERVICE PLAN 2021-2022

The Board considered the Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) Service Plan 2021/2022.

The Head of Regulatory Services introduced the report and in doing so drew Members' attention to the Recommendations, as detailed on page 37 of the main agenda report.

The Board signed off on the service plan for WRS each year. The process helped to make Members aware of what the service was proposing for the relevant financial year and provided a sign off that some central government bodies liked to see in relation to service delivery plans e.g. the Food Standards Agency.

The plan followed very much the pattern of previous years and had an Executive Summary to pick up the main points. Last year's plan was overtaken by events, with the response to the global pandemic. At the time of writing the plan, the country remained in lockdown, with only a limited picture of how we would move forward.

Government was clear that lockdown would be followed by a move back to a tier-based framework of controls that would stay in place for a period, whilst the vaccination programme was on-going. At the moment, the service was planning for some involvement in COVID-19 controls for the first quarter of 2021/22, but it seemed likely that could run well into quarter two.

Flexibility would be necessary to reshape what was being delivered as the local environment changed during the first half of the financial year.

Away from the pandemic, the service would continue to shape its work around the long-standing strategic priorities for local authority regulatory services provided by the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS).

A range of high-level activities had been identified within the plan so that Members would be aware of the general focus of activity.

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The plan was devised in the face of on-going financial uncertainty in local government generally. Working with businesses and other partners was a key theme for both generating income to mitigate financial risk but also to ensure that outcomes were delivered that matched the priorities of partners and stakeholders.

Whilst much of our work for customers had fallen off during the initial period of the pandemic response, most of our long-standing customers had come back to WRS.

The performance indicators suite generated for 2017/18 had been retained to give continued comparability of performance across the years. WRS would continue to use intelligence to drive the business forward and the embedding of this approach and its associated processes would continue.

The Risk Register had been updated to reflect the current position. Our long-standing investment in mobile and flexible working had found WRS well-placed to deal with the need for home working and the majority activities were now enabled for this working pattern.

As with previous years, Members were asked to pay particular attention to the provisions for food hygiene delivery in the coming year. This was to meet one of the recommendations of the auditors from the Food Standards Agency who visited the service in May 2017. This year would be different from previous years due to the impact of pandemic controls. The Food Standards Agency had already decided that its moratorium on the normal inspection programme would remain in place until at least 30th June 2021.

WRS were unclear at this stage as to what the Food Standard Agency's expectations would be in relation to these businesses, whether the visit programme would simply be re-scheduled or whether some investment in resource to catch-up would be required; potentially for 2 years with additional support from partner authorities to enable officers to catch up. Further information would be provided to the Board once the picture was clearer.

The Head of Regulatory Services responded to questions from Members with regards to additional funding for the 'visit programme' and the future vision for WRS in respect of working from home and virtual meeting areas/ rooms; and if a fixed presence was required.

Members were informed that currently no additional funding was available for the catch up of the 'visit programme'.

With regards to the success of officers working remotely from home this was something that would be considered going forward; however, there was a balance to be achieved in maintaining team identity and morale.

WRS carried out investigative work for some larger investigations which required a group of people working together and to maintain those relationships, by being able to bounce ideas off each other. This did not work as well in the

virtual world, as it did face to face.

There would be opportunities to reduce the footprint in terms of the number of desks required but in his opinion some of the negative things that had come out of the lockdown was personal isolation and these things needed to be addressed to ensure that we could deal such things, before rushing into an arrangement to get rid of office space and go effectively into virtual meetings and purchasing office space as and when required. He would not envisage this as the way forward, certainly not for the kind of services that WRS delivered. But there were options going forward to change the way that WRS delivered some of its services.

RESOLVED that

- a) the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Plan for 2021/2022, as detailed at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved; and
- b) that Members specifically note the level of work to be undertaken by the service this year in relation to the partners' roles as local food authorities.

37/20

ACTIVITY & PERFORMANCE DATA - QUARTER 1 TO QUARTER 3

The Community Environmental Health Manager, WRS, presented the Activity and Performance Data for Quarters 1, 2 and 3 for 2020/2021; and in doing so highlighted that, as Members would appreciate the year had continued to be a most extraordinary year in officer's professional careers; with significant resources increased in quarter 3 with officers either being fully or partly engaged in the Covid-19 response.

ACTIVITY DATA

As highlighted by the Head of Regulatory Services during the previous agenda item, the suspension of the Food Hygiene inspection programme at the beginning of lockdown would see a significant backlog having to be addressed once lockdown restrictions were lifted. However, he would reassure Members that where intelligence indicated that a premises presented a problem, officers would continue to respond.

There had been an unexpected flurry of statutory nuisance work during November.

On the Health and Safety at Work front, there was a reversal from the last quarter with accident numbers up and a fall in complaints and enquires. However, two lengthy and complex investigations had concluded in quarter 3, which related to serious injuries being sustained at a workplace and a fatality in connection with leisure activities.

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Although numbers had increased into quarter 3, the number of licensing cases received in the year to date represented a reduction of approximately 31% and 24% compared to previous years. This was hardly surprising with the hospitality sector and night time economy significantly affected by COVID-19 restrictions and overall officers had seen a significant reduction in the volume of alcohol licensing applications, particularly for temporary event notices.

In quarter 3 planning application numbers continued to rise, following the trajectory predicted by our historical data. Information Requests, often associated with the planning and development process had also continued on an upward trajectory during this period, supplemented by requests for information about the Covid-19 response.

Performance

Quarter 3 was a period in the year where reporting against the suite of indicators was more limited. The year continued reasonably well from a customer satisfaction perspective with the non-business customer measure at 73.6% and business customers at 98.1%. Given the demands and pressures on the service this year, this was seen as impressive.

People who felt better equipped to deal with issues had fallen slightly from 72.3% to 67.5%, however it was still above the 62% that it was this time last year.

Compliments outnumber complaints by around 4:1 (31:120). Staff sickness was up but still looking good at 1.65 days per Full Time Equivalent (FTE). This included additional staff taken on for the pandemic response. This was better than last year's figure at quarter 3 (3.82 days per FTE.)

Members were further informed that, engagement with licensed premises featured heavily in Covid-19 related activity. Officers reported each year on the proportion of premises subject to allegations of failing to uphold the 4 licensing objectives.

The table below showed the levels of allegations that our normal indicator would yield up until 31st December 2020 and alongside these, the same figure if Covid-19 breaches were included in the calculation.

District	Normal Measure	With Covid-19 Breaches
Bromsgrove	4.9	15.8
Malvern Hills	3.0	8.3
Redditch	8.3	19.9

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Worcester City	4.5	10.7
Wychavon	3.3	14.0
Wyre Forest	4.5	23.0

This reflected the hugely increased level of engagement with the licensing trade that WRS had seen during the pandemic. It was important to note that the vast majority of breaches identified had been minor and that the vast majority of pubs and restaurants with alcohol licenses had worked incredibly hard to achieve compliance and protect the health of customers. Now that premises could only operate as takeaways and alcohol sales had to be by delivery only, these figures should fall dramatically.

Members took the opportunity to thank officers for everything they had done throughout the pandemic and the work that they continued to do now. Officers were doing a remarkable job and Members expressed their thanks for keeping people safe.

The Community Environmental Health Manager, WRS stated that he would be pleased to pass on the thanks expressed by Members to the teams.

RESOLVED that the Activity and Performance Data Quarters 1, 2 and 3 for 2020/2021, be noted and that Members use the contents of the report in their own reporting back to their respective partner authority.

38/20

WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES INFORMATION REPORT - COVID ADVISORS

The Chairman took the opportunity to thank the Technical Services Officer, Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) for the weekly COVID-19 activity updates distributed to Board Members. It was useful to know where there were issues and what those specific issues were and how they were being dealt with.

The Technical Services Officer, WRS then provided the Board with an information report on Covid Advisors.

Members were informed that the Worcestershire district councils had received a grant allocation to fund compliance and enforcement work, therefore Covid advisors were largely funded by the district councils. However, there were now seven posts funded by Worcestershire County Council, following a request from the Incident Management Teams, 3 advisors for Redditch Borough Council and Bromsgrove District Council and 4 advisors for Worcester City Council.

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There were 24 Covid Advisors in post, but unfortunately some had recently been lost due to illness. Advisors focused on assisting with business compliance and engaging with the public, ensuring that they were maintaining Covid secure activities. When infection rates had started to increase last year, advisors also engaged with local schools and recreational areas.

During Lockdown 2 preparations were made for reopening of the Night time Economy by attempts to recruit Security trained personal. As well as being more expensive, the supply and quality was generally not good.

Members' attention was drawn to the Tables as detailed on pages 114 and 115 of the main agenda report.

Some Members further reiterated that the weekly Covid updates from the Technical Services Officer, WRS were greatly appreciated and had proved very useful and informative.

At this stage in the meeting, the Vice-Chairman took over the meeting, as the Chairman had to leave the meeting due to technical issues.

In response to Member's questions the Technical Services Officer, WRS stated that no real issues had been identified, most issues were minor. Sensible conversations were had with members of the public and the Covid Advisors. People and businesses generally engaged with the Covid Advisors whether the outcome was positive or negative.

The Incident Management Teams had raised an issue with regards to concerns being raised in communities where English was the second language. There had been a particular business that had involved a large outbreak and Public Health were involved, whereby a large number of the workforce were foreign nationals. WRS were able to access both Romanian and Bengali translators and also had the back up of a translation service.

Councillor Kent took the opportunity to thank the Head of Regulatory Services and his teams for their valued response to Member engagement.

The Vice-Chairman took the opportunity to express further thanks and appreciation to officers for the work they continued to do under very difficult circumstances.

RESOLVED that the Information Report – Covid Advisors be noted.

The meeting closed at 5.45 p.m.

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Chairman

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WRS Board
24th June 2021

Title: Chairman's Report 2020-2021

Recommendation

That the Board notes the report.

Introduction

When the new legal agreement that came into effect on 1st April 2016, it was envisaged that the new operating arrangement for the partners would be reviewed at the end of 12-months to ensure that the arrangement is working in the envisaged way. Officer members of the Board felt it appropriate that this review be presented by the Chair of the Board who oversaw this period. This gave the then Chair the opportunity to reflect on the events of her year chairing the Board. Going forward it was felt that the out-going Chair of the Board should be given the opportunity to highlight, from an elected member's perspective, the key events and elements delivered on behalf of partners by the service during the 12 months that they held the chair.

Report

This report gives an overview of the highlights that the Board covered during the period 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021. The Board received a number of information reports alongside the standard activity data and financial reporting, which has allowed members to get a better understanding of the day to day work of the Regulatory Service and to understand the issues faced by our officers in trying to protect the public in each of the districts and also supporting the local businesses to thrive and grow.

Financial Reporting

Bromsgrove, as host, has provided the Board with timely and concise budget information so that the Board can ensure the financial probity of operational delivery. Officers have also responded positively to any requests for additional data or clarifications. The host's officers continue to provide the level of assurance that the Board requires. Income generation remains a key element for maintaining the level of service delivery that we, as partner authorities receive. Maintaining a clear picture of additional funds coming into the service will be important in coming years as Government seeks to pay down pandemic borrowing.

Operational Reporting

The quarterly review of performance and activity data continues to provide members with a clear picture of operational activity in all district areas. Over the years of my membership of this Board, various suggested improvements in presenting the data have been made and members should continue to ask questions to ensure that the picture provided is as clear as possible with the resources available. Constant change for its own sake is not something the Board should seek but continuous small improvements in the report and the suite of indicators is something the Board may wish to consider in the future. Our current performance indicator set has served us well and helps to show the excellent work of our shared service but members may wish to review this again in the coming years.

Highlights

This year has been extraordinary. The phrase “we are living through unprecedented times” has probably been over-used in the past 15 months or so but that is certainly how most people will feel. And our shared service has been at the forefront of pandemic response, dealing with the business restrictions and later becoming engaged in a number of other work-streams.

At June 2020’s Board, we received our first indication of how big a role WRS would have in tackling the pandemic. Our Community Environmental Health Manager reported on the work done to that point in relation to the first lockdown and for the beginning of the re-opening process. During the lockdown, over 2,200 visits took place and the fact that the team only issued 7 prohibition notices and 30 written warnings shows that businesses across the County did the right thing.

As we moved out of the lockdown, ensuring the safety of employees and the public at premises became a key area of work, and the skills and knowledge of our officers in Health and Safety at Work law put them at the heart of making sure things were done properly. As usual, the team took its supportive approach, helping businesses to trade in a safe and compliant way and only resorting to formal action where intransigence was exhibited.

At the same meeting, we had an update on the success of the “invest to save” post that we agreed to create within the service to support income generation within the Technical Services team. Sufficient additional work had been brought in to cover the on-going cost so we agreed to continue this investment, albeit that the pandemic has limited further opportunities.

October’s meeting brought us a further update on our service’s engagement with the pandemic. We were told of the re-organisation in Community Environmental Health to deal with the pandemic and of the financial support that the County council was providing to fund a group of our Environmental Health Officers who were embedded with the Local Outbreak Response Team to address business outbreaks and

deal with many of the technical issues that arise in such situations. Their skills in contact tracing have been invaluable as part of the local response. It was clear that, whilst many businesses had controls in place, small chinks in their armour were resulting in outbreaks and our officers were able to help they create systems and processes to fill these gaps.

November's meeting brought us an update on Covid costing, where the Head of Service took members through the levels of expenditure that the district councils had collectively invested via WRS in pandemic respond. The figures were sobering. We also had our first Taste of the Taxi Standards that should begin progressing through our Licensing Committees in the coming year. The Licensing Manager explained why Government regards these as essential safeguarding measures. We also had a further update on TS development within the service from the Technical Services Manager. These last two reports showing that the service was having to continue with its normal workload whilst investing significant resources into pandemic response.

Finally, February brought us a report on the work of the Covid Advisor team from the Technical Services Manager. The decision of the six district councils to pool this grant resource allowed WRS to deliver interventions across the County, into the places where it was most required. Members have been receiving a regular update on deployments and the outcomes, which have been both interesting and helpful in demonstrating how this project has made a difference to things on the ground. We also had a new service plan, which told us that WRS would remain at the heart of pandemic response for the foreseeable future.

This has been a year of highlights, for good and ill. Throughout the year, each quarter, we have been shown how the WRS team has continued to deliver on our statutory requirements whilst tackling the largest global incident since the Second World War. Those on Covid duties and those who have continued with normal duties have delivered on whatever has been thrown at them., with little or no complaint. On behalf of the Board I would offer my thanks to the team for the work they have done over the previous twelve months. We know that this team works very hard for all of the partners and it is their dedication that ensures we continue to provide residents with a superior service that addresses many of their day to day issues in these areas, keeping our communities safe and supporting a thriving local economy, and in this year too, helping to protect them from the global threat that is Covid 19.

Contact Point

Councillor Helen Dyke
Chair of the Regulatory Services Shared Service Partnership Board
2020/21

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WRS Board: 24 June 2021

Information Report – Food Safety Recovery Plan

Recommendation	That the Board notes the Report and that members use the contents of the information provided in their own reporting back to fellow members of the partner authorities.
Background	<p>Members will be aware that the six district councils are responsible for delivering official food safety controls and related activities in most food establishments in Worcestershire to ensure that businesses are complying with the relevant requirements of food law and to enforce those requirements where necessary. WRS undertakes these activities on behalf of all six local authorities and its activities are regularly reported through the Quarterly Activity Data Report to the Board and through an annual statutory return to the Food Standards Agency (FSA.)</p> <p>These control activities include inspections, audits, surveillance, sampling and other types of interventions such as projects and questionnaires. Prior to the pandemic, Local Authorities were expected to undertake all official controls and related activities prescribed in specific legislation and those contained within specific FSA guidance and Codes of Practice.</p> <p>At the beginning of the pandemic response, the FSA suspended the routine food hygiene intervention programme in recognition of the challenges local regulatory services faced in protecting our communities from COVID-19. The suspension also reflected the changing business landscape, with many food businesses closing or changing operations due to the Covid control regime. As previously reported, WRS responded by continuing to target limited resources at the highest risk establishments while deferring planned interventions. This approach was extended by the Food Standards Agency nationally to the end of June 2021.</p>
Report	<p>At its Board Meeting 26 May 2021, the FSA set out its plan for the recovery of local authority (LA) programmed food interventions and related activities. The plan has two phases (see Appendices A and B for details,) and runs from 1 July 2021 to April 2023 and beyond. It focusses on re-starting the regulatory delivery system in line with the Food Law Codes of Practice for the highest risk establishments while providing greater flexibility for lower risk establishments. The plan also sets out arrangements for monitoring LA delivery during the recovery period.</p> <p>The nature and frequency of planned controls is contained in the Food Law Codes of Practice LAs are legally required to have regard to the Codes when performing their statutory food functions. LAs have planned intervention programmes in place, reported in our case to the Board through the Annual Report) that reflect the frequencies set out in the Codes. The Codes specify that new businesses should routinely receive an initial inspection within 28 days of registration or from when the LA becomes aware that the business is trading. At the initial inspection, the risk posed by the establishment is assessed and the risk category that the business falls into is determined using intervention rating schemes. The risk category (A to E for hygiene where A is the highest risk), in turn, determines when the next intervention is</p>

WRS Board June 2021

due. The frequency is greatest at the highest risk establishments. Interventions periods specified are 6-monthly, annually, every 18-months, every 2 years and every 5 years, although lower risk premises tend to be targeted with alternative interventions like questionnaires or intelligence-led projects.

Proposals have now been developed for the national recovery of planned interventions and other activities by LAs at food establishments during the period from 1 July 2021 through to 2023/24.

Background context

The recovery roadmap takes account of the following points:

- Numbers of 'new' food businesses have significantly increased and, although some may never have started trading and others will have ceased trading, the risks associated with them remains largely unknown.
- Some existing businesses may have changed hands while others may have started up to capitalise on potential additional trade from staycations, etc this year.
- Existing businesses will gradually be re-opening, many after prolonged closure as restrictions on businesses in the hospitality sector on eating on-site are lifted, while others will continue to diversify activities to adapt to ongoing changes in the market.
- The highest risk establishments, which represent a relatively small proportion of the total number of establishments, may have missed one, two or, in a very small number of cases, three planned interventions.
- LA resources have been, and in many cases remain diverted into activities related to reducing the spread of COVID-19.
- Experience is that, in some cases, hygiene standards have reduced since the onset of the pandemic.

The Worcestershire context

In common with all local authorities, the backlog of interventions across Worcestershire is very challenging in terms of numbers, but Members can be assured that throughout the pandemic we have continued to address poor performing businesses will shall be starting from a very high base of 98% broadly compliant operations (i.e. businesses scoring 3 or more on the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme or FHRS.)

During the time when most physical visits to premises were suspended, WRS was exploring innovative ways to keep food businesses safe. Consultants were engaged to carry out over 100 remote inspections to test the veracity of this approach. We have recently completed the highly successful Operation Corona Fries (which will be the subject of a further report to the Board) involving the intelligence-led inspection of our highest risk food businesses (those attracting a score of 2 or less in the FHRS). Intelligence gathered during Covid work indicated that this type of business might be problematic in a range of areas, so a programme of visits was created.

Key areas for intervention as part of the restarted programme are recently registered premises without an intervention, but deemed compliant and those businesses rated 3-5 in the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme, which as we have said make up the vast bulk of

Worcestershire Food businesses.

We have 1,060 overdue interventions carried forward from 2020/2, an additional 1,200 will have fallen due by the end of March 2022 and 1,300 new premises have registered and require an intervention. This makes the total visits required in the period up to the end of March 2023 around 3,600. We have extended our existing contractor resource to the end of March 2022 but, in the absence of the pandemic, would normally have six FTE EHOs/Technical Officers available to undertake inspections allowing for other activities within the team. We would estimate the need to double capacity to reduce intervention numbers and are exploring options to see how we can deliver this in Phase 2, including how many of the lower risk premises may be suitable for a remote intervention.

The key milestone dates within the recovery plan

WRS has been instrumental to the regulatory COVID-19 response of Partners, with the significant challenges and resourcing issues that entailed. Whilst it will be challenging to deliver, the elements of the FSA food safety recovery plan provide a pragmatic and practical approach to restart the system.

The prioritisation and initial inspection of new food businesses is a key concern given the numbers involved and the resource required.

We also face difficulties in recruiting new officers and contractor resource. It is anticipated that recent changes to the Codes of Practice in England and Northern Ireland, which widens the baseline qualifications that demonstrate competence and the implementation of an activity-based competency framework, will also help ease the situation. To this end we shall be looking to pilot a new role within the team of Regulatory Support Officer, whose purpose will be to review and visit low risk premises and make verification visits, escalating issues to a food competent Environmental Health Officer where there are any significant concerns relating to food safety. These will be trained in house and check lists will be provided. This model reflects that used during the pandemic by engaging Covid Advisors, who have successfully conducted visits and escalated serious issues to the dedicated enforcement team for action.

The FSA intends to use the data from FHRS (all ratings and related data being reported to the Agency,) to monitor on a quarterly basis the numbers of businesses 'awaiting inspection', numbers of new ratings being published and levels of compliance. They also propose to develop bespoke end of year returns for 2021/22 and 2022/23 that will replace the LAEMS returns required of all local food authorities, to obtain a picture of delivery across the year. Thus, partner authorities will be under great scrutiny to ensure that their food safety programmes are reinstated and brought up to date within the relevant timeframes.

Conclusions

We will restart the planned interventions in a risk-based manner, focusing resources where they add greatest value in providing safeguards for consumers and securing compliance. Hence the focus will be on those scoring lowest on FHRS and those found persistently non-compliant.

The Agency has provided a time-table for all local authorities to work to (see Appendix B,) so that relevant (mainly physical,) interventions are achieved. This however, will be a significant challenge due to the sheer numbers of premises involved. Six of the Officers who would normally be involved in the food recovery work are currently embedded in the Local Outbreak Response Team (LORT) addressing the pandemic with County Public Health consultants. The Food Safety Lead Officer for WRS is also engaged on this work 3-days per week.

Funding has been secured from the County Council to cover the cost of this work and this will be used where possible to provide backfill capacity for the business as usual food work. This should ensure that the backlog does not increase further and that inroads can be made into the onsite interventions.

The service has asked for an additional £25,000 from the 2020/21 underspend to be carried forward to supplement the funding from the County Council to support Phase 1 of the recovery plan. This will enable us to provide the resource to fulfil the requirements of Phase 1 (Appendix A,) and to make a start on the requirements of Phase 2 (Appendix B.) Food competent agency EHOs are in short supply and £25,000 buys around 17 weeks of competent officer time. As all local authorities will be seeking the same scarce resource to implement their plans, prices may become inflated further.

We hope to use monies from work on the LORT to backfill with additional capacity as long as possible but given that the work runs to April 2023, there may be a need for further funds in 2022/3 to achieve the Agency targets as outlined.

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Appendix A

Phase 1 of the recovery plan

LAs are expected to undertake sector specific official controls and official controls to support trade and enable export. They also include other high priority activities needed to address the risks in the food system at this time which will include carrying out overdue/due interventions in those businesses where proactive surveillance suggests there is a significant risk. These controls and activities must be undertaken as a minimum. LAs may defer planned interventions but, where they have the resources to do so, they should be deployed to undertake other official controls and related activities focussing on the high-risk and non-compliant businesses. Minimum controls and activities LAs must as a minimum continue to undertake the following official controls and associated activities in accordance with pre-pandemic requirements:

- Conditional and full approval visits.
- Management of food incidents and hazards (including outbreaks of foodborne illness).
- Investigation and management of complaints.
- Enforcement action in case of non-compliance.
- Undertake ongoing proactive surveillance to obtain an accurate picture of the local business landscape and identify open/closed/recently re-opened/new businesses.
- Where concerns around public health/consumer protection are identified through the ongoing proactive surveillance, LAs must then undertake appropriate interventions so that they can assess and address the risks. Other priorities LAs should give medium priority to the following:
 - Establishments overdue/due an intervention not already captured above that are rated A, B, and non-compliant C and non-compliant D for hygiene.
 - Where there has been a change of operation, activities, or Food Business

Operator.

Appendix B

Detailed timeline for Phase 2 of the recovery plan

Category A for hygiene

Over the period to end of March 2022 all establishments should have received an onsite intervention [FHRS L0,1,2]

Category B for hygiene

Over the period to end of June 2022 all establishments should have received an onsite intervention. [FHRS Level 1,2 with some premises in this category who have FHRS Level 5 but are high risk, e.g. hospitals, care homes.

Category C for hygiene

Over the period to end September 2022 all establishments rated less than broadly compliant (FHRS Level 0, 1 or 2) should have received an onsite intervention.

Category D for hygiene

Over the period to the end of December 2022 all establishments rated less than broadly compliant (FHRS Level 0, 1 or 2) should have received an onsite intervention. Some of this category will be done via initial self-assessment category.

Category C for hygiene

Over the period to the end of March 2023 establishments rated broadly compliant or better (FHRS Level 3, 4 or 5) with two consecutive food hygiene ratings of 5, one intervention may be missed. Those with hygiene ratings of 3 or 4 should have received an onsite intervention. [NB 'Missing' an intervention may create an issue with the food platforms]

Category D for hygiene

Those rated broadly compliant or better (FHRS 3, 4 or 5) will require no interventions unless intelligence/information suggests that risks have increased/standards have fallen or if the establishment is otherwise considered a priority for intervention due to the risk posed. WRS has operated a system of self-assessment with possible further intervention for a number of years and see no reason to change this process.

Category E for hygiene

No interventions will be required unless intelligence/information suggests that risks have increased/standards have fallen or if the establishment is otherwise considered a priority for intervention due to the risk posed.

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Worcestershire Regulatory Services

Supporting and protecting you

WRS Board

Date: 24th June 2021

Title: Worcestershire Regulatory Services Annual Report 2020/21

Recommendation

That the Board note the Annual Report for 2020/21 and agree that a copy be forwarded to each Chief Executive of the 6 partner authorities and also to the wider elected member base in their areas.

Contribution to Priorities

Not applicable

Summary

Under the Worcestershire Shared Services Partnership Service Level Agreement, the Head of Worcestershire Regulatory Services and the Lead Finance Officer for the host authority, Bromsgrove District Council, are required to submit to the Board an annual report that covers the performance of the shared service and provides a summary of the finances. This report covers the period from 1st April 2020 to 31 March 2021. If endorsed by the Board, a copy will be forwarded to each Chief Executive of each member authority and the authors would request that members use their usual channels within their authorities to distribute the report to the wider elected member cohort.

Report

Under Clause 11 of Part 1 of the Shared Services Partnership Agreement, the Board is required to receive a report at its annual meeting which will be held no later than 30 June. The report covers the period from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. The annual report is co-signed by the Head of Worcestershire Regulatory Services and the Lead Financial Officer for the Host Authority as required by the legal agreement.

The report covers the performance of the service for that period, both in terms of KPIs and highlights of activity, a short summary activity report appearing at Appendix 5. This has been reduced somewhat as the Committee now receives a separate Activity Data report, which covers these aspects in much more detail. Some detail of the

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performance indicators has also been covered in the Activity Data Report.

Obviously the global Covid 19 pandemic has required a significant resource input from WRS. This has meant that some areas of work were more limited during 2020/21 and the Food Standards Agency actually suspended the routine food hygiene programme so figures for these premises are more limited this year.

In spite of this, performance has remained good. Food business compliance rates remain high. Taxi license renewals have been dealt with in a reasonable time in the main. The taxi fleet appears to be generally in good order, although with council and other garages being closed for a significant period of time and with some drivers/ operators having taken vehicles off the road for a period of time, it is impossible to compare this year with previous ones.

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

- Paying for the cost of stray dog recovery,
- Unhappy that the thing annoying them had not amounted to a statutory nuisance,
- Having pest controller issues
- Content of responses to planning consultation.

Some of these are unavoidable because of the nature of the law, others simply related to people's expectations of what could be delivered. Some of these have been quite time consuming and have involved responses from a number of officers.

The indicators for licensed premises and noise complaints have been in place long enough now for us to establish good base-lines. The former shows that generally premises in the County licensed to sell alcohol are well managed. The figures can now be used, along with intelligence, to focus enforcement resources in a proactive way to tackle any individual problem premises, although these are relatively few and far between. As we have said previously, most complaints relate to nuisance issues, usually created when a venue introduces a novel activity like live music to diversify its activities. These are usually relatively minor and the overall rate of noise complaints is relatively low and probably reflective of the generally good environment in Worcestershire.

The Annual Report also gives a summary of the financial position, the key achievements and covers issues relating to human resources. There are also sections on risk management and equalities. The Report will be published on the WRS website and will be shared with

Financial Implications

other partners e.g. Worcestershire LEP. A press release will be sent out to accompany the publishing of the report. Putting the report into the public domain meets the requirement in the Regulators Code, made under the Regulatory Enforcement and Sanctions Act 2008, which requires local authorities to publish summary information about their regulatory activities each year.

The financial implications are contained within the Annual Report.

Contact Points

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Background Papers

WRS Annual Report 2020/21

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ANNUAL REPORT

2020/21

Making Worcestershire a healthy, safe and a fair place to live where businesses can thrive

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INTRODUCTION

This Annual Report has been produced for the Joint Board in accordance with clause 11.1 of Part 1 of the Worcestershire Shared Services Partnership Agreement. The report covers the progress and performance of Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) for the period 1st April 2020 up to the 31st March 2021 and reports operational activity by the relevant service elements for the financial year. The report summarises key performance data for WRS and provides a summary of the financial position. The report also meets the requirement of the Regulators Code, which requires local authorities to publish a summary of their regulatory activities on an annual basis.

The year has been dominated by Covid 19. This has been the busiest year that all of our long standing staff have had to deal with. As members will see later in the report, not only has the service been directly engaged with the pandemic response, it has also taken on a number of other projects for the 7 Worcestershire Councils, contributing further to Covid control. Although there were some changes to what the service was required to deliver during 2020/21, much of what is often called “business as usual,” continued to be delivered. It is to the credit of the staff that they have continued to support the public with our normal activities, whilst others have been dedicated to pandemic controls. This has been achieved with a relatively small increase in staff numbers, so the teams have absorbed much of the pressure and carried on delivering. There was excellent work undertaken during 2020/21, with very good results across a range of service areas. WRS managers continued to work along the lines identified in the comprehensive 3-year Business Plan for the period 2020-23, adopted in February 2020.

Last year offered limited opportunities to develop new income streams, with most of our local government customers dealing with pandemic related issues. However, we have managed to retain the majority of our customers and will continue to look at where we can build on this. Work from other sources will also be a focus once the majority of pandemic activity is behind us. The service has previously looked more widely at contracts that we might have the skills to discharge perhaps outside of our role for the partners. There are restrictions in law on how far a local authority can go in its income generation activities before it needs to compete on a level playing field with other businesses through a vehicle such as a community interest company or a trust. At this point the service is well within the restrictions and can continue to build its portfolio of work areas.

As members will see, the service managed a significant underspend last year, but a proportion of this was down to spending that had to be deferred so there is a request to retain some of the carry-forward. Also areas like mileage claims were down due to lockdown, with travel being limited and officers having limited duties in work areas like food inspection.

Looking forward, our three strategic priorities, remain relevant for now and into the post-Covid 19 environment. They are:

- Supporting the Local Economy
- Improving Health and Well-being
- Tackling and Preventing Crime and Disorder

Pandemic control activities are continuing into 2021/22 but we continue to support legitimate businesses and residents, particularly the vulnerable, where we are able and at the same time we tackle those who break the law, ignore best practice or adversely impact the environment. Central to this approach was and remains the availability of accurate data and intelligence sharing. Our intelligence unit coordinates and analyses intelligence obtained by WRS officers and external agencies, helping managers to target WRS resources more effectively and to forge links with other enforcement agencies and partners to share intelligence and target enforcement action. During 2020/21 we had several notes back from partners indicating that intelligence disseminated to them had supported operations in both Fire and Rescue and Policing. The continued management and co-location of the County Council's Trading Standards team alongside WRS helps to support this approach as well as providing an income stream to cover the cost of various support services that WRS provides to this team.

Simon Wilkes
Head of Regulatory Services

James Howse
Lead Financial Officer

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS FOR WRS IN 2020/21:

These are covered in a number of sections below:

PERFORMANCE

Our ability to report performance has improved throughout the years with the refinement of the IDOX UNiform management information system. The corresponding demand and activity data provided to Joint Board members has continued to provide a clear picture for them of the work being undertaken by WRS.

Our key performance measures continue to focus on customer satisfaction and the positive compliance of businesses. The pandemic has meant that proactive activities have been more limited this year, but we have targeted higher risk businesses when it was needed and the key priorities of each partner council within the regulatory arena have been fulfilled. Business and consumer satisfaction have remained high in spite of changes made in some areas to service delivery. Previous year’s results appear in brackets in the relevant box providing a comparative view of performance over time.

	Measure	Figure	Commentary
1	% of service requests where resolution is achieved to non-business customers satisfaction	74% , (69.5%, 63.0%. 75.4%, 78.9%, 78.2%, 77.4%)	Based on an average score for 6 questions relating to the interaction of the service with non-business customers. 81% found their contact with WRS helpful, up from 78% last year. 90.4% found the information and advice provided easy to use, up from 84.4% last year. 68.3% felt that the length of time to resolve their problem was satisfactory (an improvement on last year,) and 76.3% (3% points less than last year,) felt that the speed of initial response from WRS was satisfactory. This last was not unexpected given the impact of the pandemic slowing our ability to respond to a number of cases. Generally, people appreciated the need for this and did not react negatively. Managers will continue to encourage staff to make decisions quickly in relation to the progress that can be made on service requests, and we will continue to look at how we can better manage public expectations around what is achievable with nuisance issues. Overall, given the pressures of last year, managers are happy with this result.

2	% of service requests where resolution is achieved to business customers satisfaction	98.4% , (97.4%, 97.2%, 97.7%, 97.1% 97.9%, 97%)	Based on an average score for 9 questions relating to the interaction of the service with business customers. Over 500 businesses replied to our questionnaires. Of those who responded, 98.5% (97.7% last year,) felt that their business had been treated fairly and 99.2% (98.5% last year,) of customers felt staff were polite in their dealings with them and informative. Some 99.2% (98.7% last year,) of customers found the information and advice we provided easy to understand and 98.2% (97.4% last year,) found their interaction with us helpful. 96.4% (95.9% last year,) were happy with the speed of our responses and, of those who made enquiries rather than being visited, 97.3% (96.5% last year,) were satisfied with the response. As you can imagine, as a regulator we cannot always tell businesses what they want to hear.
3	% Food businesses broadly compliant at first assessment/ inspection	Bromsgrove 98.4% (97.1, 97.2, 98.7 99.1, 97.1.) Malvern Hills 98.6% (98.1, 97.2, 97.0, 97.7, 97.) Redditch 97.6% (95.6, 96.0, 96.7, 97.6, 95.1.) Worcester City 98.4% (97.5, 98.0, 98.0, 98.6, 98.2.) Wychavon 99.2% (98.0, 97.4, 97.8, 98, 99.1.) Wyre Forest 98.2% (98.1, 97.7, 97.2, 98.1, 96.6.) Worcestershire 98.5% (97.5, 97.3, 97.6, 98.2, 97.4,)	For much of the year the Food Standards Agency had a moratorium on the normal food inspection programme. Therefore, the focus of visits represented by these figures only relates to premises visited due to a complaints or intelligence and new businesses seeking registration and a hygiene rating. Figures are not comparable with previous years' work because of this.
4	% of food businesses scoring 0,1 or 2 at 1 st April each year	Bromsgrove 1.4% (2.9, 3.6, 1.3, 0.9, 2.9.) Malvern Hills 1.6% (1.9, 2.8, 3.0, 2.3, 3, 2.4) Redditch 2.4% (4.4, 5.1, 3.3, 2.4, 4.9.) Worcester City 1.6%	Food premises scoring 2 or below on the Food Hygiene Rating System are deemed to be at risk of not producing safe food and are subject to further intervention until such time as they meet requirements or face formal action. As mentioned above, because of Covid and the suspension of the normal processes, these figures are not comparable with previous years.

		(2.5, 2.2, 2.0, 1.4, 1.8,) Wychavon 0.8% (2.0, 3.0, 2.2, 2, 0.8,) Wyre Forest 1.8% (1.9, 2.4, 2.8, 1.9, 3.4,) Worcestershire 1.5% (2.7, 2.7, 2.4, 2.4, 2.6,)	
5	% of drivers licence renewal applications issued within 5 working days of receipt of a complete application	96.9% (75.2, 91.4, 87.7)	This measure was introduced in 2017/18 and looks at how quickly driver licenses are renewed. This is one of the licensing processes where generally no additional paperwork is required before someone is re-licensed so generally this is one where the WRS team is in most control over timescales. This measure is much improved from last year. The taxi market has been impacted by the pandemic however renewal applications have been consistent with only a few drivers choosing not to renew. There have been some significant changes being made in house to ensure applications were still issued without face to face contact.
6	% of vehicles found to be defective whilst in service	6 = 0.39% Of 1514 vehicles on the road county-wide	As members will likely know, many of the Council garages were closed for much of the pandemic period and so vehicle tests could not take place. Many of the in-service failures are identified when vehicles are presented for one of their tests so it is hardly surprising that numbers are significantly down. We did no programmed enforcement due to Covid, so we hope to catch up on this work during 2021/22.
7	% of service requests where customer indicates they feel better equipped to deal with issues themselves in future	68.2% (58.1%, 59%, 72.5%, 73.8%, 76.8%, 74.2%)	This focuses on non-business customers. It is a specific question asked to members of the public in the questionnaire to test if the information and support provided to them by WRS is likely to help them deal with their own problems in the future. The measure is up on previous years but still lower than 3 years or more ago when the measure regularly exceeded 70%. Officers have noted increasing expectations of what can be achieved for customers so this has almost certainly influenced the figure over time.

8	Review of register of complaints and compliments	<p>42 complaints (44, 27, 25, 31, 17, 24, 47, 70)</p> <p>161 compliments (163, 128, 138, 103, 51, 57, 36, 24)</p>	<p>This is our longest running performance indicator in this format, hence the long list of previous year's figures. This year's figures are very close to last years.</p> <p>The biggest area for complaint this year related to not meeting people's expectations over nuisances. Often an issue does not reach the threshold for statutory nuisance and noise made by people that would constitute anti-social behaviour does not meet the threshold and is not a matter the service deals with.</p>
9	Staff sickness absence at public sector average or better	<p>1.9 days per FTE (4.4, 4.12, 12.45, 5.95, 2.3, 3.9, 7.7, 9.5)</p>	<p>This is clearly an exceptional year, with exceptional circumstances. Whilst the additional home working arrangements may have made it easier for people a little under the weather to work, given the additional work taken on over the period, this demonstrates the level of commitment from the team.</p>
10	% of staff who are satisfied with working for WRS	<p>93.5% 98%, 88%, (NB: Annual figures for 2017/18 and before, 80%, 85%, 77%, 82%)</p>	<p>50 of our 68 staff responded to the survey, the same as last year and still comparable with previous years except 2017/18 when a different process was used. Not all responded to all of the questions. This score is based on those who scored 5/10 or better for the question in the staff survey which asked, are you satisfied with working with WRS. Due to current time constraints we have yet to do more detailed analysis of broader staff comments but it is good to know that many are happy working for the service. 30/46 scored working for the service as 8/10 or better which is really pleasing given our expectations of performance.</p>
11	% of licensed businesses subject to allegations of not upholding the 4 licensing objectives	<p>Bromsgrove 5.4% (6.8% 8.7%, 6.73%, 3.8%, 7.9%) Malvern Hills 3.5% (5.7%, 4.8%, 4.94%, 3.6%, 3%,) Redditch 8.3% (8.5%, 7.1% 8.65%, 2.7%, 8.1%,) Worcester City 5.7% (8.8%, 8.1%, 8.19%, 5.8, 9.4%,) Wychavon 3.7% (4.2%, 4.0%, 4.97%, 4.0, 5.5%,)</p>	<p>Linked to the Crime & Disorder agenda and introduced following discussions with elected members, this measure is now in its sixth year. It still shows that generally premises across the County are well run and controlled by their operators. Comparing these figures with those over 6 years, the ones for 2016/17 still stand out as a blip in terms of improved performance and this year appears to be on the low average side, possibly because many premises have been closed for much of the year due to the pandemic. Many premises have, however been open</p>

		<p>Wyre Forest 5.1% (8.5%, 7.0%, 8.29%, 5.8, 9.4%,) Worcestershire 5.0% (6.8%, 6.4%, 6.78%, 4.4%, 6.9%,)</p>	<p>for takeaway and of course at times for wider operations under Covid restrictions. Complaints about premises generally relate to minor issues, mainly to do with noise. Many pubs are trying to diversify, offering music and other entertainment, which is within their license conditions, but sometimes this is not welcomed by some living nearby.</p>
12	Rate of noise complaint per 1000 head of population	<p>Bromsgrove 2.56 (1.96, 2.7, 2.82, 3.0, 2.7, 3.1) Malvern Hills 2.45 (2.07, 2.2, 2.39, 3.0, 2.3, 3.9) Redditch 3.67 (2.97, 3.2, 3.61, 4.1, 3.7, 3.5) Worcester City 3.10 (2.78, 3.2, 3.13, 4.2, 4.0, 2.9) Wychavon 2.08 (2.01, 2.1, 2.46, 2.7, 2.6, 2.5) Wyre Forest 2.71 (2.37, 2.6, 3.23, 3.4, 3.0, 3.0) Worcestershire 2.74 (2.35, 2.7, 2.93, 3.4, 3.1, 3.8)</p>	<p>Looking at the figures in this part of the table, this unusual year appears to have been average to slightly above for nuisance complaints. We have said at several points in the year that noise complaints did increase, possibly because people were less aware of their environments during the day as they'd normally be away at work. It still suggests that overall the environment for Worcestershire residents is good.</p> <p>1,635 noise complaints were investigated during 2020/21, 252 more than the previous year, with 1,140 or 69%, related to noise from domestic properties.</p>
13	Total Income	<p>13.42% Note: £405,00 as a % of previous budget of £3.017M</p> <p>Using the current budget the figure yielded is 12.67%</p>	<p>This excludes any income for Covid related activities so it retains comparability with previous years. Slightly down on last year as many of our regular customers asked for no service during the initial period of lockdown but business picked up after this and we managed to retain the majority of customers and a significant income stream. Once out of the pandemic response, we will be able to focus more on this aspect again.</p>
14	Cost of regulatory services per head of population.	<p>Based on overrun cost of £3.049M against the current ONS population estimate of 601,113 the service cost is:</p> <p>£5.07 per head</p>	<p>This is the amount spent by the partners following the off-setting of cost with income, then divided by the most recent mid-year estimate offered on the County Council's website. It is difficult to benchmark this figure as WRS functions are not all of those reported in the relevant part of the RO return to the MHCLG.</p>

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Strong management of performance is vital for the success of this service, ensuring that customers are satisfied and partners are reassured by the cost effective delivery of the service on their behalf. Whilst everyone must accept responsibility for managing performance, the WRS management team is committed to driving performance forward so that a high standard of service delivery can be maintained.

Management team meetings are used to review performance against the service plan and to highlight any issues of concern. Principal Officers (first line managers) attend these wider management meetings to ensure a two-way flow of information between management and staff. This has been supplemented throughout the pandemic with a weekly informal meeting of the Head of Service and Team Managers to ensure everything is kept under review. Teams have their own detailed plans that sit below the service plan signed off by Joint Board. Progress against this is monitored by Team Managers and Principal Officers.

The Management team also looks to the strategic direction of the service and ensures that the operational and financial resources available to partners are used in the most efficient manner to achieve both their individual strategic aims together with WRS priorities.

Page 38 Continued refinement of our IT platform ensures our ability to report to Joint Board on our performance measures and that this remains accurate. The Uniform system operates well across all functions but there will be a need in the next few years to re-procure our main back-office system. The service also subscribes to the national IDB intelligence database, enabling it to share intelligence with other local authorities in the region and nationally so that common issues and individuals can be identified and work to deal with them co-ordinated. MHCLG is looking to encourage the broader use of the system, especially at district council level.

There are a wide range of bodies to which the service must report data (e.g. Food Standards Agency, Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Health and Safety Executive, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Gambling Commission etc.). All statutory reports are submitted so as to ensure that WRS continues to meet its partner's statutory obligations. It was hoped that the central bodies would accept a single data return for all partners but it now appears that all Departments with the exception of the Health and Safety Executive continue to require individual returns for each partner. WRS provides these as necessary.

A short summary of activity data is included at Appendix 5 to avoid duplication with the wider and more detailed set of activity data that is provided in the final Activity Data Report for 2020/21, which members will receive at the same meeting where this Annual Report is presented.

Internal Audits

There were no internal audits during 2020/21 due to the pandemic. At least one, looking at some elements of licensing will take place during 2021/22.

SERVICE DELIVERY HIGHLIGHTS

There have been a number of highlights throughout the year that showcase the work of our teams and illustrate the breadth of their responsibilities. We also feature the other work-streams taken on, including elements of pandemic control work.

Community Environmental Health Team

Nuisance

The various lockdowns throughout the year have resulted in a number of spikes in demand for the service. A significant increase in specific types of complaints have been noted, namely those relating to domestic noise, smoke nuisance and of course, alleged breaches of the COVID-19 Business Restriction Regulations. We believe the former two may be attributed to the fact that people were at home and being annoyed by things that they wouldn't normally encounter as they would be at work during the day. We re-configured officer roles in the service to meet Covid and statutory responsibilities whilst delivering on council service priorities and operated agile and flexible arrangements in moving people around in response to the significant and differing demands we experienced in what was a quickly changing regulatory environment.

Lockdown also appears to have led to reduced tolerance of some unavoidable noise sources such as construction site noise, even where this is taking place during normal daytime working hours. Telling people that such work needs to continue in spite of the fact they are trying to work at home has not been easy.

The easing of lockdown restrictions then led to a spike in complaints about noise from licensed premises. However, this had been anticipated by the service and many complaints were dealt with on the basis that some degree of extra noise was inevitable from premises having to carry on their operations almost entirely outdoors.

An appeal against an abatement notice relating to noise from a large distribution centre was lodged against one of the partners, however eventually the company accepted there was a problem, withdrew their appeal and worked with us to ensure that the actions necessary would abate the nuisance. This proved successful and the affected residents were very pleased with the significant reduction in noise levels. It is sad that company did not respond as positively in the first instance.

Two prosecution files were submitted in relation to noise from barking dogs. The first case resulted in fines and costs of £764. The second case is going to trial, with the next hearing due in October 2021.

A number of notices have been served during the period in relation to issues as diverse as noise nuisance, accumulations of waste, pest problems, light nuisance and inadequate drainage systems. We are continuing to work with a business in Wychavon to assist them with complying with an abatement notice relating to noise from an automated car wash. Numerous complaints were received relating to light nuisance from upgraded lighting at a major supermarket in Malvern Hills and following our intervention, the supermarket agreed to revise the lighting to the satisfaction of the affected residents.

Food Hygiene

Following the Covid pandemic the Food Standards Agency suspended all routine food inspection work in Q1 other than a requirement to monitor high risk premises, (e.g. non-compliant premises rated FHRs Levels 0-2), dealing with any new Approved Premises and responding to complaints. However, we continued an ongoing dialogue with businesses, particularly those posing the highest risk and new registrations, conducting Covid-safe visits where there appeared to be a problem.

There have also been fewer food complaints as pubs and restaurants remained closed. We continued to try and re-rate businesses under the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme wherever possible and appropriate, for example where they had completed structural works, or introduced food safety management systems to address a low rating or those who needed an initial rating having recently opened. To assist in this, we piloted novel methods of working such as virtual visits by video call to be followed up with physical visits when permitted.

We continued to receive new Food Premises Registrations and under the restricted circumstances assessed risk by sending a questionnaire to all new businesses to help us identify type of food being produced. This system also enabled us to maintain contact with our very low risk businesses and we continue to receive a good response. In many cases we have been able to give a business a hygiene rating from the information provided, in others we will verify information by phone or a Covid-safe visit. We have carried out remote inspections of some premises but the demand on resources from Covid work has limited some activities.

Food officers also spent time working with NeoKare Nutrition (Redditch,) a new food factory producing processed human baby milk. The company, who have a factory in India, were recommended to the county by the FSA/DIT. It is the first private business of this type to operate in the UK and has been a learning curve for all parties. Their long-term plan is to export their products throughout Europe.

In Q4 the food programme, which had been virtually suspended since 2020 by the Food Standards Agency, gradually began to take a new shape to cope with the backlog of premises due visits, both existing and new. We added two new contractors during this period who have been able to make a small but not inconsiderable contribution to what is one of our main statutory functions. During this period, officers in the CEH team were also involved in inspecting FHRs 0-2 premises. Regrettably, many of these premises had not improved, some had deteriorated with Hygiene Improvement Notices having to be served and two requiring the submission of case files for the consideration of prosecution identified. We also piloted a remote inspection platform with a view to using this to review selected Level 5 businesses as part of the catch-up programme during 2021.

The Principal Officer who leads on Food Safety was also involved in supporting the Worcestershire LEP-driven "Make It Worcestershire" (MIW) recovery programme for the hospitality industry. MIW is essentially a promotional platform created by a partnership of the WLEP, the County and District Councils, the HWCC and WRS.

WRS also put in a successful bid for some support funding from BEIS and made a presentation to an LGA webinar.

Floods 2020/21

Once again, the Team responded to severe flooding in the County. We contacted all affected food businesses providing pre-opening advice and support and followed up with visits to ensure that good hygiene conditions were met before they re-opened. This included swabbing to check that food preparation surfaces were safe to use. We also provided advice and support to help the affected communities.

Brexit

Despite lockdown restrictions we continued to provide an Export Certificate service without extended delays which enabled our major exporters to trade as normal. Our Food Lead also became heavily involved in Brexit preparations for food businesses, attending various webinars and having to deal with a constantly changing landscape of information.

There was a significant increase in requests for Export Certificates and we were able to work with several businesses to resolve some major export issues which presented themselves.

Local Outbreak Response Team

In Q1 we began to engage with the local outbreak management process that provided the key mechanism for controlling the spread of Covid 19. The focus was outbreaks at those workplace settings where our Health and Safety at Work role is relevant. However, we were able required to contribute well beyond this remit and became involved in outbreaks at schools, care homes and the larger high-risk businesses enforced by HSE due to our expertise in communicable disease control.

Worcestershire's Local Outbreak Response Team (LORT) was established on 1 July 2020, when the Outbreak Control Plan was published. It comprises Public Health Practitioners operating under the direction of the Director of Public Health with a unit of WRS Environmental Health Officers. A team of four EHPs and part of the time of a Principal Officer was embedded into the County system to deal with any incoming demand as a priority workstream.

We continued to build on the local outbreak management process, developing our outbreak investigation and back-tracing response where WRS expertise in communicable disease control and health and safety at work proved invaluable.

The arrangement was immediately called into action when the team was asked to support Herefordshire Public Health in their investigation into a major farm outbreak on the county border, where over 100 Covid cases were identified in overseas workers. The lessons learned from the Herefordshire incident were soon put to the test with two outbreaks in Worcestershire, the first at a food packaging firm which distributes vegetables and salad products and the second at a large food manufacturer.

In September officers were involved in providing advice and guidance to a public house in Welland where two members of staff and a member of the public were found to be infected. This generated social media interest and this contrasting small business outbreak demonstrates that Covid can affect any workplace setting. Hence

investigations were supplemented by an ongoing WRS programme of providing targeted business advice and support countywide, particularly in respect of the hospitality sector, to help ensure Covid safe workplaces and businesses.

In early December, we sent out information to all our registered 'wet bars' advising them of Covid controls required and how they needed to comply with food law now they were required to offer a 'substantial meal' with alcohol service. As the Board will be aware, many struggled to comply with this requirement leading to much negative publicity.

At the start of Q4, the CEH officers embedded in the Public Health LORT team were at full stretch dealing with Covid outbreaks in businesses large and small. During the period, the agreement with HSE that we could deal with Covid measures at premises enforced by them continued to work well, enabling WRS officers to give Covid advice which might not have been otherwise available at short notice.

Various projects were run to provide business support including advisory visits to commercial and industrial estates combined with letter drops providing updated advice and contact information. In general, most businesses had implemented good control measures and it was obvious that most of the infections had been picked up in the community. The exception was some small offices which decided on a full return to work for their employees only to find themselves having to close when most staff went down with Covid.

The LORT team was instrumental in detailed backwards contact tracing of Covid cases to try and trace common sources of infection and our Principal Officer in the LORT spent considerable time working with the Three Counties Showground on re-planning a safe events programme for the first half of 2021 and also working with Worcester Racecourse on its recovery programme after a year in which it was not only flooded twice but also remained closed due to pandemic.

Covid-related enforcement work

In addition to our regular Public Health related work, the Covid-19 pandemic saw the team responding to significant additional responsibilities.

The first phase of response from the Community Environmental Health Team was to make proactive checks that businesses were required to be closed. Officers were tasked to undertake patrols to check that businesses were closed and over 2,000 visits were made countywide. Compliance was generally high, though Prohibition Notices had to be served in respect of 14 premises. Officers adopted an Engage/Educate/Encourage/Enforce approach to implementing the Business Restriction Regulations, supported by targeted patrols, intelligence-led investigations and the excellent relationships forged through close liaison with the local Policing Teams.

The team responded to over 500 service requests in Q1, providing support and advice to businesses, investigating reports of businesses trading despite restrictions, or trading in a manner that breached restrictions. This task was particularly onerous as the rules and regulations were subject to regular change at extremely short notice, requiring a high level of professionalism from Officers in keeping abreast of the changes in legislation and applying them practically in assisting businesses to comply.

Projects were undertaken relating to the takeaway sector, the control of legionella, garden centres, outdoor markets and golf courses to support business compliance with the Covid regulations. Monitoring visits were also made to warehouses and certain HSE enforced premises by agreement.

In Q2 the team dealt with over 900 Covid-related service requests and incidents across the County between 1 July 2020 and 30 September 2020 inclusive. Officers continued to interpret the ever-changing legislation and guidance in order to support businesses to operate in a COVID secure manner. Advice was well received and the business sectors affected by closure or significant adaptations to their operating models in the vast majority of cases acted positively and appropriately to achieve compliance. Where businesses failed to comply with the legislation, officers have issued prohibition notices. Challenges from traders and their solicitors have been forthcoming but in each case the service has maintained a robust position to protect the public health.

Q4 saw the implementation of Operation Corona Fries, which targeted takeaway food premises with poor food hygiene standards (FHRS 0-2) and were considered likely to employ poor COVID-19 controls. An intelligence product recognised this correlation by using data provided by the COVID Advisors. 13 businesses were inspected for both food hygiene and COVID controls. Rather surprisingly, COVID controls were found to have been satisfactorily implemented but, of the 13 businesses inspected, 6 maintained their poor FHRS rating indicating no improvement on prior performance, 6 had their FHRS score reduced, and one improved slightly from a FHRS core of 2 to 3, which indicates the business is broadly compliant. Work with these businesses is ongoing to secure compliance.

Working in partnership with the business community

The Team has also been working closely with Economic Development and Town Centre management teams to support the delivery of grant funding to those eligible for either Council or Government financial support packages, assist in recovery plans for city centre and town centre businesses and provide advice and support for businesses in respect of safe working practices and government guidance. We have also made regular contributions to the County Covid Business Support Group and County Recovery Groups.

Primary Authority relationships

Work continued on Primary Authority arrangements as businesses have felt the pressure of the pandemic and needed more support than ever to ensure that changing regulations were being implemented correctly. Managers have been working closely with OPSS (The Office of Product and Public Safety) to ensure that any changes have been communicated to our portfolio of Primary Authority Partnerships. All our food Primary Authorities have survived the pandemic although most have been inactive for the past year apart from Aspens whose main contracts are in schools.

In December we welcomed two new Primary Authority businesses –Alimenti (Malvern) a small food consultancy and Mindful Chef (Redditch) a web based healthy meals provider who have trebled their business in the past year.

Health & Safety at Work

Two lengthy and complex investigations resulted in successful prosecutions. These involved serious injuries sustained at a workplace and a fatality in connection with leisure activities. An investigation into a serious accident at a hotel in Droitwich was concluded by the company accepting a Simple Caution. This is an admission of guilt which is placed on record and may be considered by a Court in the event of any future contraventions.

Serious Crime

The team has been a significant contributor to the joint operations which have arisen from the work of the Serious Organised Crime Focus Groups across the County including joint operations at takeaways and restaurants, barbers' shops and nail bars.

Safety at Sportsgrounds

This year saw the team taking on safety at sportsgrounds work on behalf of the County Council and regulated premises across the County have been contacted with guidance regarding the controlling of crowds in relation to COVID security.

Worcestershire Works Well

The county's wellbeing at work scheme also restarted activity with a new set of standards and a contracted management scheme led by the Chamber of Commerce. WRS continues to have a role on the Steering Group and provides four representatives to support businesses already part of and new to the scheme.

Technical Services Team

Environmental Permitting

With many businesses closed or with modified operating procedures during most of last year, the permitting inspections had to be flexible. We worked with the businesses we permit to ensure they received the appropriate level of support. We were lucky that none of the businesses went bankrupt and all were subject to a light touch 'inspection' where their operation represents a low risk and for those with higher levels of risk on-site inspections were undertaken. We are fortunate that generally we have good compliance levels in Worcestershire, however we are mindful that we often receive intelligence around non-compliance through visiting customers (mainly competitors not applying for permits where they are required). Despite our exposure to such information was much reduced last year we are working with a couple of businesses where permits are required to be applied for and a couple where breaches of existing permits require further engagement with the business.

Local Air Quality Management

Frustratingly during a period where there was significant change to traffic and therefore traffic related pollution our local air quality monitoring was disrupted by the closure of the laboratory used for analysis of the diffusion tubes during lockdown in March 2020. In that period, we took the opportunity to switch laboratories and was able to recommence monitoring in July 2020 providing an opportunity to annualise the data that can be used in reporting. Given that the annualised data result omitted

the March – June period with most significant traffic reduction it is interesting to note that despite this, during 2020 the nitrogen dioxide levels in our areas of greatest concern were roughly 19% down on the previous year. As you would expect this is not considered a representative year for air quality monitoring, reporting and action planning. A lack of traffic during the past year has also meant it has not been possible to investigate the ‘normal’ pattern of traffic contribution to pollution and similarly drafting of plans to tackle this has not been possible.

Planning support on technical issues

As many of our Planning Officer colleagues will testify, planning applications and discharge of condition requests have continued at a pace. Significant volumes of consultations have been received for us to assist. Most relate to contaminated land (70%) with smaller numbers for nuisance and air quality.

Dog Warden Service

The number of straying dogs was significantly down last year, likely due to the number of people working from home or on furlough who were able to be around for their pets. Following contractor difficulties early in the year, the low numbers of dogs and restrictions on hospitality and travel helped, as the dog wardens agreed to provide out of hours cover on a rota basis so that service standards could be maintained. We were successful in retendering at the end of the year and now have a contractor able to deliver the service across all Districts WRS provide the service for.

Subsidised Pest Control & Worcester City Gull Control

With the exception of Bromsgrove, the levels of spend by the District Councils that offer a subsidised pest control service have decreased significantly this year, consistent with the trend over the previous few years. In Bromsgrove there was a small increase. Sewer baiting on behalf of Severn Trent Water was completed in all six District Council areas within budget.

The COVID restrictions did not impact on pest control service delivery which permitted access for technicians into residential properties. However, for gull control there was a significant impact because a large number of the premises where access is required to treat gull nests, are commercial. Whilst licence applications to treat the nests were successful (a legal requirement) some could not be implemented where a business was closed or could not permit access to our technicians. Nonetheless there were some particularly successful elements of the work that was completed, including nest and egg removal in Britannia Square with hawk flying to disrupt attempts by the gulls to re-nest. A full assessment of the work was presented at Environment Committee in October 2020. In preparation for this year’s breeding season liaison with Natural England commenced early and agreement was reached to pave the way for an Organisational Licence to be set up as a pilot for Worcester City to undertake egg and nest removal without the requirement to submit licence applications for each roof to be treated during the 2021 breeding season.

Other work:

Petroleum Licensing

This is a function we deliver for the County Council. Inspections have continued for our petroleum storage premises and there are a number of sites currently undergoing renovations. We have been engaged with a number of operators about the possibility of integrating Electric-Vehicle recharging on their sites. Issues arise due to compliance with the electricity standards and explosive environments of the garage sites but we continue to liaise with the industry.

Covid Advisor delivery

In November 2020 approval was given to WRS setting up a combined Worcestershire COVID Advisor team. Initially funded from a Defra COVID Compliance and Enforcement Grant for four months, we were able to get COVID Advisors in post from the end of November. The team of 20 COVID Advisors were increased to 27 by allocation of funds to specifically provided additional support in Worcester City, Redditch and Bromsgrove Council areas. The WRS COVID Advisor business case set out a procedure to determine deployment of COVID Advisors to provide guidance to businesses and encourage appropriate behaviour by the public. They were supported by a smaller enforcement team focusing tackling businesses identified as failing to comply with the restrictions. WRS deployed COVID Advisors based on a number of priorities following reviews of PHE infection rate data, LORT (Local Outbreak Response Team) feedback on employment setting outbreaks, concerns raised by Incident Management Teams, reports of compliance concerns, Police reports of COVID related issues or others (such as youth congregations) and requests for assistance from partners (for example assisting schools that struggled to maintain social distancing amongst parents at school gates).

COVID advisors maintained records of their engagements and any issues identified. The number of interactions with the public and businesses increased month on month as the economy was reopened and more of the public returned to the high street and recreational areas. The issues identified have shifted during each stage of the pandemic but have largely been around appropriate controls and risk assessment elements (staff wearing face coverings, pinch points, queue management and signage) in businesses and appropriate conduct by the public (face coverings in shopping centres, social distancing at school gates and recreational areas).

It has been very difficult to measure the success of the Advisors. However, given that on average one thousand members of the public were engaged with on a weekly basis and between 500 and a thousand businesses are supported in some way, there will have been benefits from the reminders and extra care taken as a result.

Lost to Follow-up Contact Tracing

From December 2020 WRS have also assisted Public Health with local contact tracing. When National NHS contact tracers have been unable to contact someone within 2 days of a positive test, the 'case' is referred to WRS to make additional attempts at contact. The purpose was to ensure the case is self-isolating and to obtain contact details for those who they have been in contact with and are likely to require to self-isolate as well. Working with our District Council colleagues in Worcester City, Bromsgrove and Redditch (mainly) we have been able to bring about an enhanced rate of success to the contact tracing with 10% more cases completed than the national set up. This will have assisted with infection control.

Licensing

The Licensing team have continued with business as usual activity throughout the pandemic ensuring the trade can continue to work where they have been able to and supporting the application process. Both Licensing and Community Environmental Health have worked closely on Covid Enforcement priorities with licensing officers supporting where necessary.

The pandemic forced our hand to move many processes to remote measures either by phone, email or video call. These have continued where appropriate alongside the introduction of licensing appointments at each district to ensure a licensing presence. We have also worked closely with District Communication teams to ensure communication with the sector is current and timely to enhance the customer journey and this has been well received by all licence holders. The Team now look forward to implementing the new legislative guidance set by the Department for Transport on Taxi Standards and carrying out more enforcement activity across the districts.

Hackney Carriage and Private Hire

Covid has restricted much policy work during the year, however the long-awaited introduction of the Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicles Standards has started working through policy development and committee stages, with all six districts now proposing to go out to consultation on a draft policy to be introduced during 2022. The Statutory Standards published on 21st July 2020 set-out a range of robust measures to protect taxi and private hire vehicle passengers, particularly those most vulnerable. Government advice is that licensing authorities must work together to ensure that, above all else, the taxi and private hire vehicle services the public use are safe. The Licensing team will continue to work on the implementation of these standards in 2021/22. The team are aware of the importance of these standards and will work to ensure the correct procurement of services are administered across all districts.

New service elements and ways of working

Electric Vehicles

A number of districts have now approached us to look at a planned approach for the introduction of electric vehicles as part of their wider council carbon neutral agenda and we will continue to look at the best approach for their fleet of vehicles taking into account the make-up of their current fleet and the age criteria policy of each council.

The government has confirmed its ambition to see at least half of new cars to be ultra-low emission by 2030. The proposals are outlined in their 'Road to zero' Strategy. The desire is to reduce emissions from the vehicles already on the UK's roads, and drive the uptake of zero emission cars, vans and trucks to deliver cleaner air, a better environment and a strong clean economy.

As set out in the government's 'Air Quality Plan' the UK will end the sale of new conventional petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2040 so we will continue to work with each district and members to incorporate a plan that meets these objectives but not foregoing the challenges that this will involve including the trade and the infrastructure that is required to make this viable both financially and economically.

Pavement Licenses

In response to the coronavirus pandemic, the Business and Planning Act 2020 (“the 2020 Act”) made temporary provision for a fast-track process to allow businesses selling food or drink to obtain authorisation from the local authority for the placement of furniture such as tables and chairs on highway adjacent to their premises also known as a pavement licence. This was a new temporary licensing regime that the team constructed together working collaboratively with all six districts to ensure a new end to end process was in place with all payment engines integrated before the implementation date of July 2020.

Alcohol, Entertainment and Gambling

Unlike previous years the applications in this area of licensing remained low due to the hospitality and night time economy sector being hit hard by the Covid pandemic. There was a small surge towards the end of the year due to some restrictions being lifted on 12th April in line with the Prime Ministers ‘Roadmap’ out of lockdown. The team have worked with businesses to provide support where appropriate, but it has been a quiet year.

In Q4 due to the easing of some restrictions and relaxation of ‘off sales’ as part of the Business Planning Act 2020 (temporarily modify the Licensing Act 2003) the team were proactive in looking at suspended licenses to ensure sales were not taking place where licenses have been suspended. Some of this work was jointly done with trading standards colleagues.

Animal Licenses

WRS are well represented in this area of work as we sit on both the Licensing and Animal Welfare Group and the Canine, Feline Sector Group. Both of which have strong links with DEFRA and policy change. Unfortunately, this sector again was hit hard during the pandemic with more people working from home and choosing not to go away many businesses struggled. WRS introduced a deferral process for renewal applications early in the year to give business owners some respite whilst they were in financial difficulty. The team also communicated with businesses throughout the pandemic to ensure we could offer advice and support where we could.

As with other local authorities across the country WRS have noticed an increase in illegal puppy breeding, nuisance issues and the high prices that are being charged for the sale of puppies throughout various points during lockdown. In response to this the team started an intelligence operation to capture this information and act where appropriate. The operation has been extended to the end of May 2021 but the team have already noted a number of repeat offenders after initial analysis. The team will work closely with Trading Standards colleagues where there is a suggestion that illegal importation is linked to activities.

There have been a number of consultations that WRS have contributed to which may lead to further work for us in the next financial year. In December 2020, the government announced an 8-week public consultation on the trade of primates as pets in the UK, with an aim of banning the sale, trade, breeding and keeping of any primate as a pet. Currently, 85 species of primate can be kept in the UK without any legislation and can be bought kept and sold as easily as a goldfish or budgie. The second consultation also in December 2020 was the legal requirement to micro-chip cats and once again this had an 8-week consultation process.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Budget 2020/21

Quarterly financial monitoring reports are provided to managers and finances are regularly considered by officers from the partners ahead of each Joint Board meeting. Bromsgrove DC operates a robust ordering and authorisation process to ensure the transparency and accuracy of costing. Good management of costs, income generation and the management of vacancies led the service being some £147,990 underspent at the end of the year. Some of this was due to income generation, however, some expenditure was also limited, hence the request to carry forward a proportion of the underspend. The lead-in time for replacement dog warden vans was too long to bring it in ahead of year end. A proportion of the DBS checks for taxi drivers were deferred due to Covid restrictions and them being allowed to defer renewal. Both of these will need to be done during 2021-22. We were also unable to recruit sufficient capacity of agency staff to some roles, which meant our existing capacity had to absorb the pressure. A large underspend on stray dog related contracts also made a significant contribution with the service dealing with significantly fewer stray on behalf of the six councils.

The draft outrun budget for 2020/21 is included as Appendix 3, along with the proposed budget for 2021/22 onwards at Appendix 4. The outrun position is subject to final audit, although the budget has now reduced so far that this is no longer a statutory requirement for specific audit of the WRS accounts. Hence, this will be done as part of the overall audit of Bromsgrove District Council's accounts.

Until 2020/21, the operating assumption was a cash standstill budget, with increasing income targets set to balance the budget each year. For that year, partners agreed an uplift to cover the 2.75% salary increase and also a significant uplift in pension forward funding. Members recognised that the income generation progress could not deliver the increase expected, especially in the current climate with financial uncertainty and the Covid pandemic. Officers have committed to reviewing accommodation needs during 2021/22 to allow the resolution of future charges for the physical hosting of the service at Wyre Forest House. Should it be necessary, the service's reserve may help partners to buffer some financial impacts should the financial model for the service become difficult to achieve, whilst determining the way forward for the delivery of these functions should the local authority financial situation become significantly worse in the future.

WORKFORCE PLANNING AND HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

The WRS structure has now been in place since October 2015 with Simon Wilkes as the Head of Service with a team of four Managers looking after different areas of the service. David Mellors as Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager covering all of the responsibilities of his Community Environmental Health team, (Food Safety, Health and Safety and Statutory Nuisance, with some other minor areas) and the Trading Standards remit (Weights and Measures, Food and Agricultural Standards, Product Safety, Fair Trading, Animal Health) on a contractual basis since the County's departure from the partnership in 2016. Mark Cox continues to head up the Technical Services Team covering Technical Pollution (managing Planning, IPPC, Contaminated Land, Air Quality), Dog Wardens, Pest Control, Information Management & Database administration and more recently the first contact team of Duty Officers. Kiran Lahel has now been appointed permanently to the role of

Licensing and Support Services Team Manager. This leaves her substantive post of Business and Relationship Manager vacant and we will decide how best to use this during 2021/22. One of the things that has emerged from the pandemic response is how limited our management capacity is and we have struggled at times to service all of the necessary management commitments.

Staff turnover remains low, although occasionally a member of staff will decide to move onto pastures new. This has allowed us to recruit new but experienced staff from either other backgrounds to suit our income generation work or from other local authorities. All of the newcomers have added value to what is being delivered. At the 1st April 2021, the total permanent staff establishment was around 68 FTE, although some of this capacity is on fixed term contract. It was also supplemented during the year with additional agency staff and others to deliver Covid related activities such as the Covid Advisor project.

Last year the pandemic made it more difficult to look at training needs. Face to face training was not an option but a lot of training provision did move on-line with webinar style approaches being used with shorter durations. This helped to maintain relevant competencies and we will look to return to our usual PDR approach this year with a main one and a 6-month review.

Staff Survey

50 of our 68 staff responded to the survey, the same number as last year. This is comparable with previous years except 2017/18 when a different process was used. This score (93.5%,) is based on those who scored 5/10 or better for the question in the staff survey which asked, are you satisfied with working with WRS. Due to current time constraints we have yet to do more detailed analysis of broader staff comments but it is good to know that many are happy working for the service. 30/50 scored working for the service as 8/10 or better which is really pleasing given our expectations of performance.

Some issues with IT during the pandemic have been flagged but this is mainly down to the need to change to remote meetings and the use of platforms like Teams, which have been rolled out without the usual preparation and the ability of the networks to deal with the volume of data traffic. This has been a common experience for everyone working in local government during the pandemic so no criticism is intended of our IT host. They have responded incredibly well in the circumstances as have many small in-house teams.

Staff Sickness

During 2020/21 staff sickness reached 1.9 days per FTE. We assume that more home working will have meant staff were more likely to work if they were feeling under the weather or work through minor ailments as the commute was not a barrier. It also demonstrates the strong commitment of the team to ensuring issues were addressed in spite of the pandemic. Whilst an aging service is likely to have a slightly higher rate of sickness due to natural causes, managers will continue to work to maintain the figures in the normal range of 3-6 days.

ACCOMMODATION

WRS remains located at Wyre Forest House, Finepoint Way, Kidderminster. The contract was renewed during 2020 but concerns were expressed at the increase in charges, which Wyre Forest removed on the understanding that fees for the coming years would be agreed ahead of 2022/23. The use of flexible and mobile working is generally now the norm, and has been expanded further during the pandemic. Staff frequently using home as their start and finish point for work in the field and some officers have now been enabled to work at home.

Office based activity provides a benefit to team performance, identity and morale so, once the pandemic has run its course, field officers will likely return to their normal flexible pattern of coming into the office a few days per week to liaise with managers and colleagues or for meetings, and on the other days they work flexibly, usually with home as the start and finish point. The touch down points retained in each of the councils have provided an excellent venue for licensing appointments and these have been welcomed by the taxi trade in particular. Where possible we have offered face to face licensing engagement during the pandemic but this has been on an appointment only basis not as a drop in surgery pre pandemic. This is something that we are likely to continue as it provides a useful balance between availability for the trade and efficiency of service delivery. Taxi drivers/ operators can be told what they will need over the telephone, ensuring that their face to face time can be used more effectively to ensure complete applications are made and that paperwork has been completed correctly.

These work patterns enable staff to strike a better work/life balance which is essential for good morale, whilst maintaining the team ethos, having an organisation with which the staff identify and belong to, and also giving the opportunity to share ideas and issues with other team members. In spite of what those who evangelise about the benefits of virtual contact say, it does not build the kinds of trusting, working relationships necessary for the work that we do, so whilst we will be making more use of systems like Teams, it will not wholly replace face to face interaction between staff members. However, as part of the review of hosting costs, the service will review desk allocations to see if it can reduce its footprint in Wyre Forest House.

BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION (SERVICE DELIVERY)

The further training provided to both managerial and operational staff on the components of an intelligence model, the process of developing raw information into finished intelligence (the intelligence cycle) and how to use intelligence during decision making processes has been at the heart of our response to the pandemic, and delivering both enforcement and Covid Advisor capacity to the places where it can do the most good. Weekly reviews of the full intelligence picture using WRS data, Public Health and Public Health England data, intelligence from the Police and other sources was used to direct and task our operational capacity to the parts of the county where it had the potential to have the most impact. That's whether it related to helping businesses with queues, persuading parents to keep apart whilst waiting at the school gates or our enforcement of business restrictions. The pandemic response has helped us to see how we can better deploy the intelligence model as a business tool with our normal work and at least one operation looking at food businesses with low food hygiene rating scores has led to positive outcomes.

We have talked in previous annual reports about how we have been developing the Intelligence Operating Model as an approach for our services but the work during the pandemic has probably helped that to mature more quickly. The key will be seeing it routinely contributing in our "business as usual" operations. Whilst WRS has

traditionally undertaken strategic tasking in the form of business planning, the tasking and coordination process was not routinely employed at a tactical level until more recently. Each operational team now has a tactical tasking group that convenes to review on-going enforcement activity, consider proposals for new 'project based' work and assess the level of available resource. This ensures a range of factors are considered during decision making processes including the level of risk, our priorities and available intelligence. This change of thinking is of critical importance as the service places a greater emphasis on taking 'evidence based decisions' and continues towards an intelligence led approach. In addition to tasking, a service wide tactical assessment is now produced on a six monthly basis and statistical bulletins on a quarterly basis. We will continue to commission products including 'problem profiles' like previous ones on food hygiene standards, noise pollution and dog welfare so that we have the best possible understanding of the issues we face.

RISK MANAGEMENT

WRS recognises that the development of policy, delivery of service priorities and the management of its services for six partners attract risk. In reviewing its service risks and the effects of management strategies and policies WRS seeks to:

- Identify, assess and manage risk
- Safeguard the services assets and equipment
- Focus on the delivery of its service to its customers

The Service aims to ensure that Risk Management becomes a natural component of its management process and that when and where appropriate; risks are avoided, reduced, transferred or retained. As part of these arrangements, a WRS risk register has been developed that can be integrated with the partners' individual risk registers. This register will be maintained and reviewed periodically to assess current risks and identify forthcoming priorities. The service's Business Continuity Plan is going to be reviewed over the coming 12 months with the support of colleagues in North Worcestershire Emergency Planning. The restructured document should bring the service in line with the approach taken across other partner areas.

The risk register at Appendix 2 includes some consideration of Covid related risks, although many of the generic risks cover the impacts because responding to pandemic influenza had already helped to inform some of the risks identified. We have seen that many of the elements of our response have served us well during the pandemic. Having mobile and flexible working patterns already embedded in the service has meant that officers have experienced an increased flexibility in work patterns as opposed to the major upheaval to those usually present in the office 5-days per week. Even those whose roles would normally require them to adopt the more usual office based work pattern have been enabled as flexible workers and many have found this helpful.

However, these work patterns do create their own risks around feelings of isolation, lack of team identity and loss of belonging to the organisation and basic things like risk of muscular-skeletal injury because people spend long hours working at desks that are not ideal. So, whilst the service will make more use of virtual meetings, they will not fully replace face to face interaction, nor will they lead to the abandonment of a physical location for the service. As part of the review of hosting costs however, the service will look at its footprint in Wyre Forest House to see if it can be reduced.

As was mentioned earlier, the Food Standards Agency has provided an indication of what it is likely to expect in the coming months as a return to normal business with food business regulation. Many areas of work have had to continue but in a Covid secure way. We went through a period of restricting our interventions in people's homes in relation to nuisance issues until we have devised safe ways that limited the risk of our officers or even our equipment carrying the virus into people's homes. These controls will likely need to remain in place for some time while the virus continues to circulate in the population. This may mean we have to respond less slowly to some complaints as we will continue to allow time between deployments so that cleaned down equipment can be quarantined for a time before its next deployment. Likewise, other areas of work like food inspection will need to be delivered in a Covid-secure manner with the correct PPE and controls in place. The staff, as front line workers are advised to do lateral flow tests regularly to monitor their own health.

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

WRS is committed to equality of opportunity and respect for diversity. The service links in with the host Authority's adopted Equality Standard for Local Government as a framework to help embed equality and diversity into everyday aspects of its work. Equality issues have come to the fore in recent months with the Black Lives Matter movement highlighting racial inequalities but clearly there is a wider agenda for public services to address. The professional bodies for regulators are looking at how to respond and how to help make services be more reflective of communities they serve. I'm sure this is something that we will take on board at WRS and do our best to move forward in an inclusive way.

THE NEXT STEPS

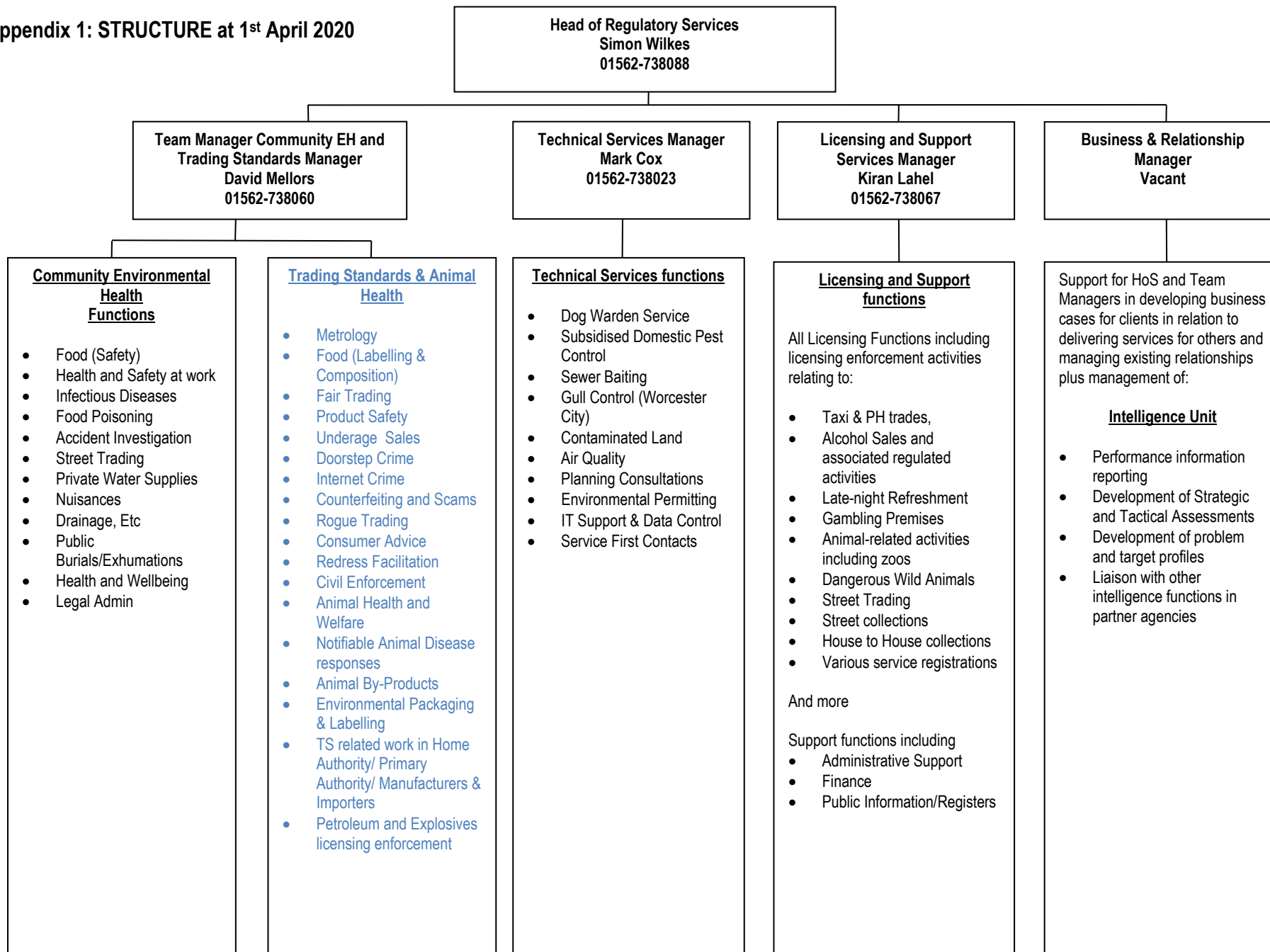
Without the challenges of Covid 19, this would be a look forward at how we move on into the new financial year and what the headline areas for work are. We would be talking about key areas for activity and development being:

- Continued delivery of the WRS Business Plan and our annual operational service plans
- Maintaining existing income streams and looking at other ways of generating income for the service,
- Following our philosophy of continuous improvement, continuing to review operations to improve marginal efficiencies,
- Continuing the process of channel shift by increasing the customer's ability to use self-help, do transactions on-line and monitor progress of work.
- Continue to work closely with County Council Trading Standards colleagues and other partner agencies by maintaining links that help to support both WRS and other services to the benefit of local people.
- Continue to engage with partners to see if any other services could sit well on the WRS platform.

All of these things will feature, however, we know from last year the Covid 19 is a huge drain on resources and, even as we hopefully come out of the pandemic, there will continue to be a need to staff Covid related interventions. We will continue to work alongside Public Health colleagues in the Track, Trace and Test regime, dealing with local outbreaks arising in a wide range of businesses and other premises, potentially including schools.

The Food Standards Agency has provided us with a draft of their proposed approach to re-starting and catching up with work that has been missed. An 18-month programme of interventions starting in October 2021 will need to be delivered, ensuring that the vast majority of food businesses receive a physical visit during that period. This is ahead of a new approach to food hygiene being introduced from 1st April 2023. Making a good start on this in the last 6-months of 2021/22 will be important. Of course, none of our usual work has gone away and nuisances, health and safety breaches, licensing offences and all of the very technical matters we deal with have to be addressed. There is never a quiet time in the world of regulation and the service will be doing its best to cover all that is required.

Appendix 1: STRUCTURE at 1st April 2020



Appendix 2 – WRS Risk Register

Risk Description	Consequences	When is this likely to happen	Current Position			Control measures
			Likelihood	Impact	Matrix RAG Status	
Loss of Data through IT failures	Disruption to Service Provision. Inability to produce records and data.	On-going	Low	High	Green	Wyre Forest ICT has effective processes and business continuity plans in place. WFDC upgraded relevant systems including Windows. The service is in the process of moving to Office 365 during 2021/22, which will provide better access to a range of provisions including Microsoft Teams and Power BI
Issues with the WRS database system	Impact on work planning. Self-help may not enable savings required	On-going	Low	High	Green	The contract has been retendered and awarded through the CCS framework for a two-year term with a view to moving to a cloud based system via a tendering process at that point. This will begin to be investigated next year.
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	Green	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 now do this. Touchdown stations remain available in partner council locations. Working from WFDC new depot was not required in 2020 because of the other steps taken. Managers can look at whether a further reduction in space occupied is feasible once the end of pandemic controls is reached.
Maintain our capacity to achieve service delivery	Disruption to service e.g. Major staff sickness (e.g. flu pandemic) or Unable to recruit or retain suitably qualified staff.	On-going	Low	Medium	Amber	The pandemic response has shown that the service was well-placed to respond and less than a handful of officers have themselves suffered the illness. Consultants are available to provide short term cover and, whilst this worked well in peace-time 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. Regional and sub-regional groups are in place so can provide shared resources for local authorities if required.</p> <p>Effective training and development processes are in place to ensure recruitment and retention of staff. There is increased training budget pressure, reduced technical knowledge in neighbouring authorities and increased importance in maintaining heightened skills for contractual obligations and commercial edge.</p> <p>Regular inventory and maintenance of equipment is undertaken. In the future, budget for replace may be an issue but would be a relatively small amount for partners to share.</p>
Pest contractors cease operations.	Disruption to service. Negative media coverage. Increased public health risks	On-going	Low	High	Green	The Pest control framework contract has multiple pest control suppliers so the loss of one allows work to be moved to the others. This should limit or eliminate risk, although the unlikely loss of multiple companies might create capacity issues.
Effective and efficient contract arrangement for dog control	Disruption to service if no kennels available. Negative media coverage. Increased public health risks	On-going	Low	High	Green	The Out of Hours and Kennelling contracts were re-tendered to enhance the existing arrangements and provide resilience.

Hosting support does not deliver necessary financial and HR support to ensure efficient management	Efficiency of management reduced; staffing issues remain unaddressed and performance suffers	On-going	Low	High	Amber	Issues around access to the financial system from Wyre Forest House should be relieved with new BDC finance system procurement. Workarounds remain in place in the interim.
One or more partners continue to be under great financial pressure and may consider alternatives to the partnership to deliver their service	Creates reputational issues for remaining partners and increases the need to manage overheads. Difficulties in delivering highly varied levels of service	On-going	Medium	High	Amber	New legal agreement limits variations in contribution before partners have to 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.
Robust arrangements in place in relation to obtaining legal advice and monitoring legislative changes.	Loss of cases is costly and damages reputation.	On-going	Low	Medium	Green	Continued close working with BDC legal team and other partners who don't use BDC for advocacy. Technical and legal training days for staff. Difficulty in keeping informed of Case Law developments. Membership and attendance of Officer Technical Groups outside the County does assist.
Service provision complies with Government requirements	Adverse comments following audits e.g. FSA Intervention by Government bodies i.e. FSA, whilst highly unlikely, is damaging to reputation.	On-going	Low	High	Amber	Limited detail of what statutory minima are can make decision making difficult around what is required in law as a minimum. LGA clearly aware of impact of budget reductions on regulation and has made it clear Government cannot expect what it had previously. Fewer interventions/ audits by government. 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. The Code is however currently going through major changes and likely to move to a point where it is closer to the WRS model of operation.

						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.
Failure to deliver external contract work at the level expected by the business or local authority with whom we have the contract	Damage to reputation, loss of future income streams, financial impact of paying damages	On-going	Low	High	Green	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

Appendix 3: Detailed out-turn for Regulatory Services 2020/21

	Full Year Budget 20-21	Committed Expenditure Apr - Mar 21	Variance
Direct Expenditure	£'000	£'000	£'000
Employees			
Salary	2,851	2,689	-163
Agency Staff	0	113	113
Employee Insurance	25	4	-20
Sub-Total - Employees	2,876	2,806	-70
Premises			
Rent / Hire of Premise	54	52	-2
Cleaning	1	0	-0
Utilities	0	0	0
Sub-Total - Premises	55	52	-2
Transport			
Vehicle Hire	13	1	-12
Vehicle Fuel	8	5	-3
Road Fund Tax	1	1	0

Vehicle Insurance	5	3	-1
Vehicle Maintenance	3	4	1
Car Allowances	75	45	-30
Sub-Total - Transport	104	58	-46

Supplies and Services

Furniture & Equipment	32	42	10
Clothes, uniforms and laundry	2	0	-2
Printing & Photocopying	17	12	-5
Postage	11	11	0
ICT	40	82	42
Telephones	21	14	-7
Training & Seminars	23	10	-13
Insurance	20	14	-6
Third Party Payments	144	144	0
Sub-Total - Supplies & Service	309	328	19

Contractors

Dog Warden	145	39	-106
Pest Control	50	75	25
Taxi / Alcohol / & Other Licensing	62	32	-30
Other contractors/consultants	3	3	0
Water Safety	5	1	-4
Food Safety	1	0	-1
Environmental Protection	10	43	33

Grants / Subscriptions	13	16	3
Advertising, Publicity and Promotion	6	0	-5
Sub-Total	293	209	-83
Income			
Training Courses / Bereavement / Works in Default / Sewer Baiting etc	-440	-405	34
Sub-Total	-440	-405	34
Service Total	3,197	3,049	-148
To be recommended			
Refunded to Partners	0	78	78
Stray Dog Van Reserve	0	30	30
DBS Check Reserve	0	15	15
Food Inspections Reserve	0	25	25
Sub-Total	0	70	70
Net Position	3,197	3,197	-0

Appendix 4: 3-year budgets 2021/22 to 2023/24

Account description	Budget	Budget	Budget
	2021 / 2022	2022 / 2023	2023 / 2024
	£000's	£000's	£000's
Employees			
Monthly salaries	2,935	3,012	3,090
Training for professional qualifications	0	0	0
Medical fees (employees')	2	2	2
Employers' liability insurance	25	25	25
Employees' professional subscriptions	2	2	2
Sub-Total - Employees	2,964	3,041	3,119
Premises			
Rents	52	52	52
Room hire	2	2	2
Trade Waste	1	1	1
Sub-Total - Premises	55	55	55
Transport			
Vehicle repairs/maint'ce	3	3	3
Diesel fuel	8	8	8
Licences	1	1	1
Contract hire of vehicles	4	4	4
Vehicle insurances	5	5	5
Van Lease	9	9	9
Fares & Car Parking	5	5	5
Car allowances	70	70	70
Sub-Total - Transport	105	105	105

Supplies & Service

Equipment - purchase/maintenance/rental	22	22	22
Materials	9	9	9
Clothing, uniforms & laundry	2	2	2
Training fees	23	23	23
General insurances	19	19	19
Printing and stationery	17	17	17
Books and publications	2	2	2
Postage/packaging	11	11	11
ICT	40	40	40
Telephones	21	21	21
Taxi Tests	22	22	22
CRB Checks (taxi)	26	26	26
Support service recharges	100	100	100
Support service recharges - ICT	44	44	44
Sub-Total - Supplies & Service	356	356	356

**Budget
2020 / 2021
£000's**

**Budget
2021 / 2022
£000's**

**Budget
2022 / 2023
£000's**

Contractors

Consultants / Contractors' fees/charges/SLA's	229	229	229
Advertising (general)	5	5	5
Grants and subscriptions	11	11	11
Marketing/promotion/publicity	2	2	2
Sub-Total - Contractors	247	247	247

Income

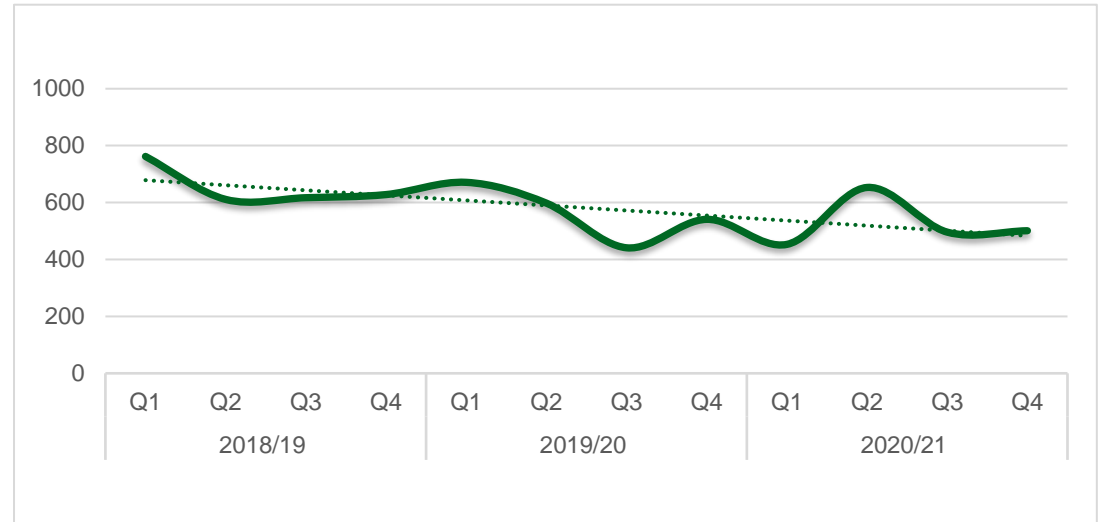
Grants / Primary Authority / Food Training / Contaminated Land / Stray Dogs / Ad Hoc	-372	-372	-372
Sub-Total - Income	-372	-372	-372
Income			
From partners for Technical Officers	-97	-100	-104
Sub-Total - Income	-97	-100	-104
Additional Income			
Income to be found due to unavoidable salary pressures	-60	-134	-208
Sub-Total - Income	-60	-134	-208
DISTRICT PARTNERSHIP BUDGET	3,197	3,197	3,197

Page 65 **Current Partner Percentages**

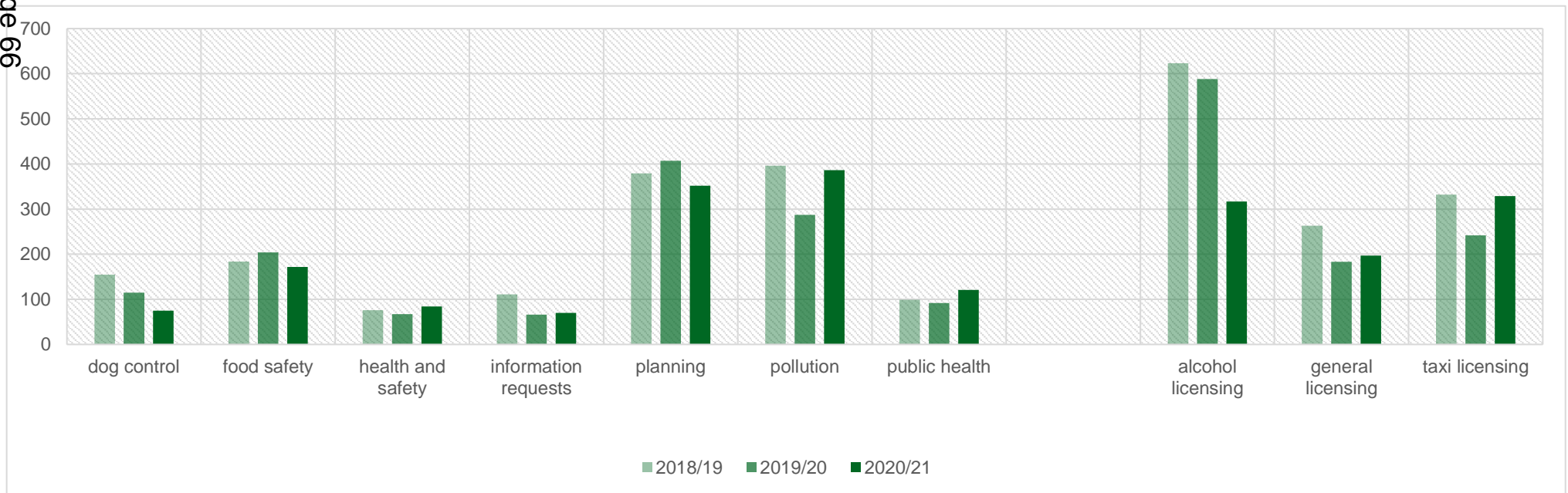
Bromsgrove	14.59%
Redditch	17.57%
Wyre Forest	15.15%
Wychavon	23.29%
Malvern	12.82%
Worcs City	16.58%
Total	100.00%

Appendix 5: District Council Summaries

The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the **Bromsgrove district**. The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS.

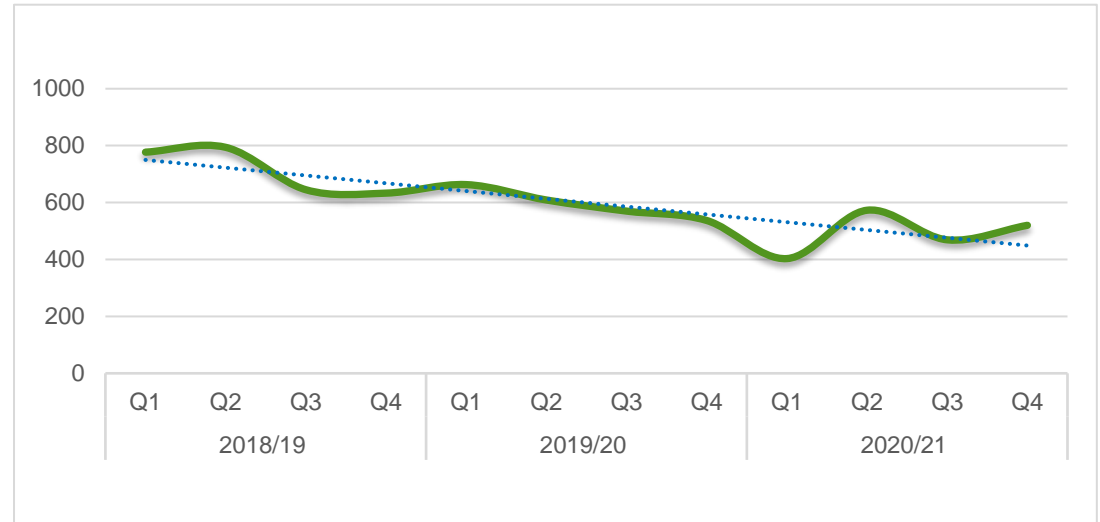


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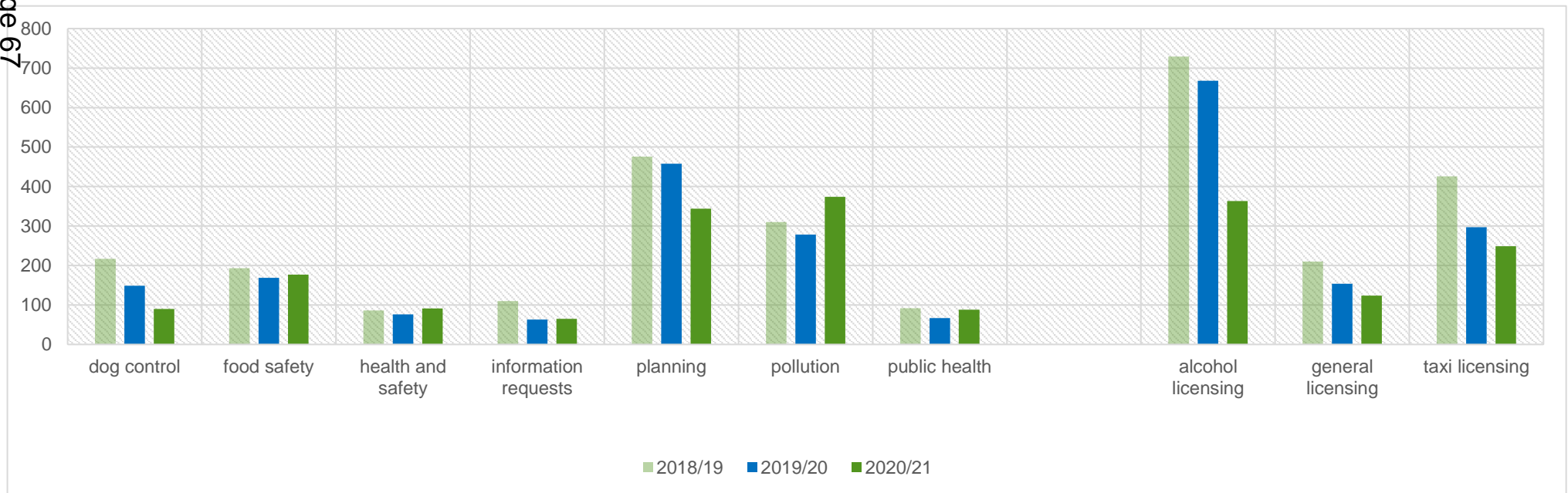


Appendix 5: District Council Summaries

The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the **Malvern Hills district**. The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS.

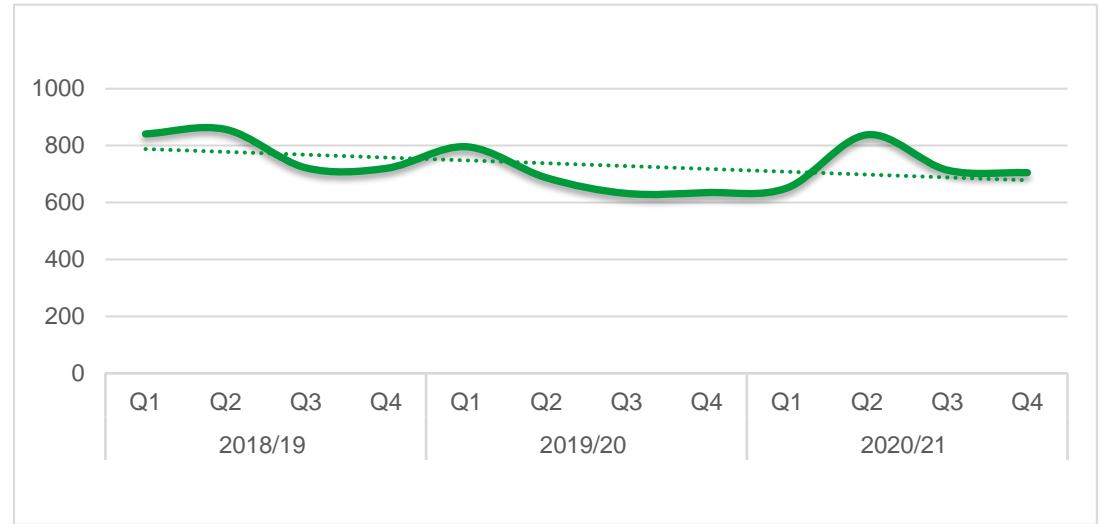


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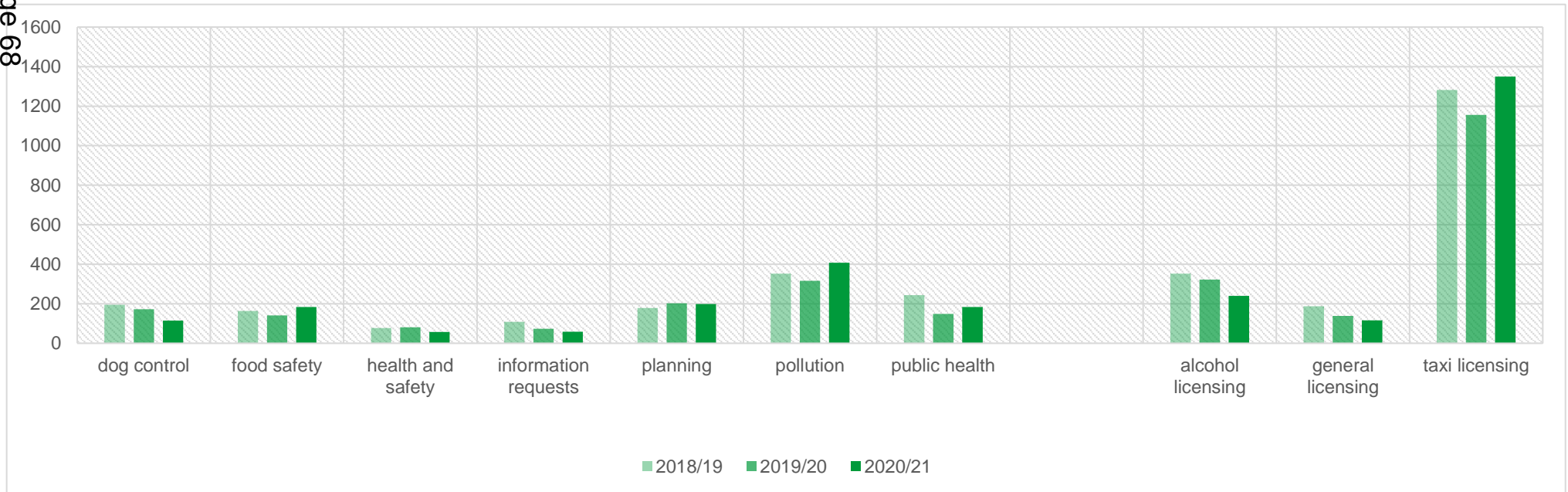


Appendix 5: District Council Summaries

The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the **Redditch district**. The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS.

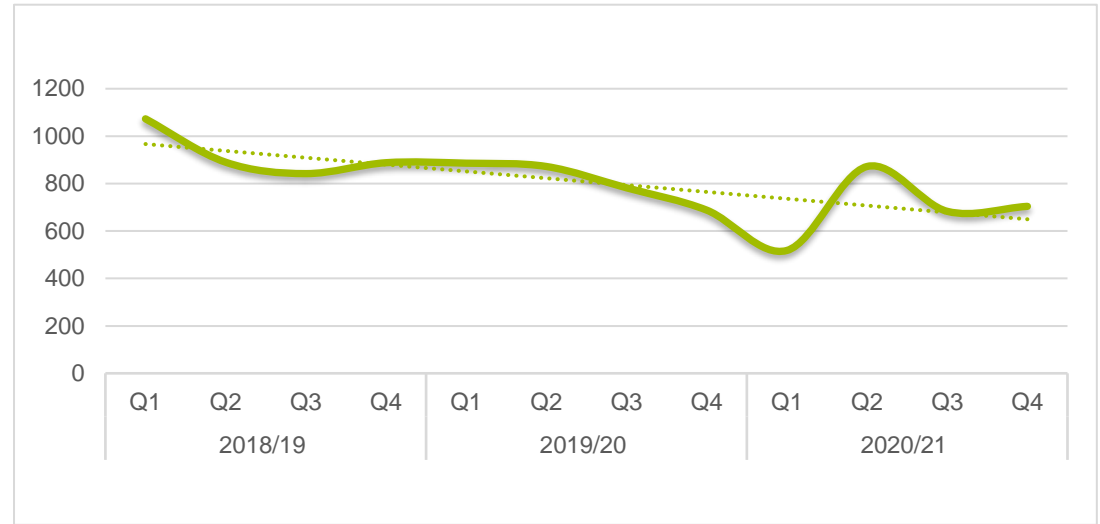


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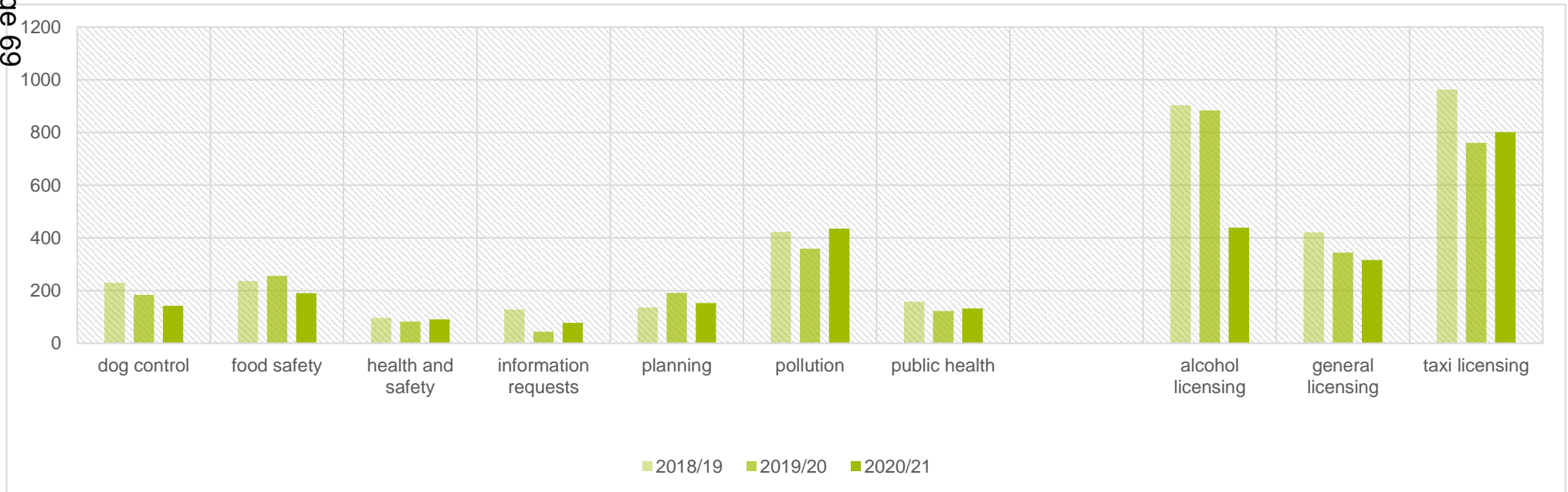


Appendix 5: District Council Summaries

The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the **Worcester City district**. The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS.

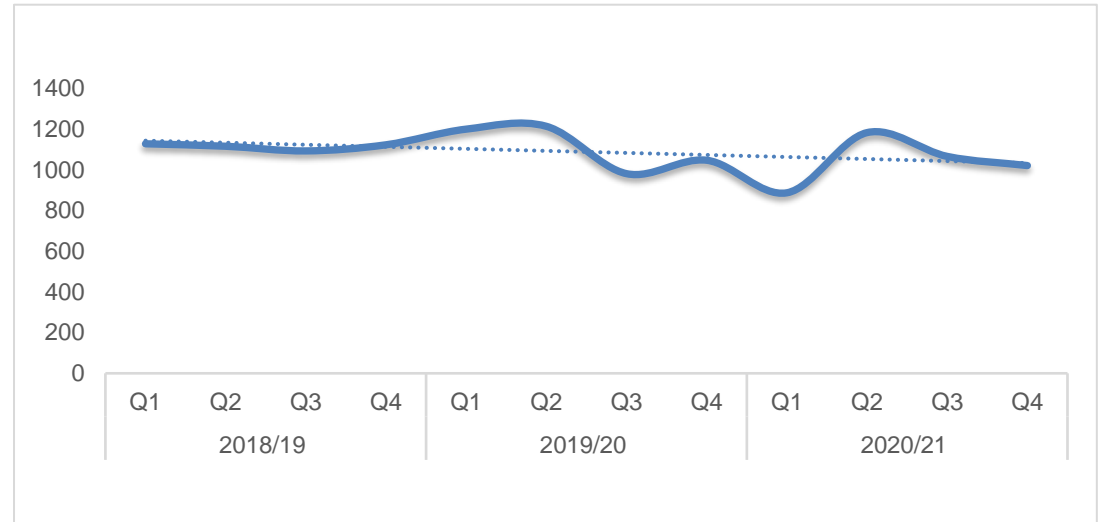


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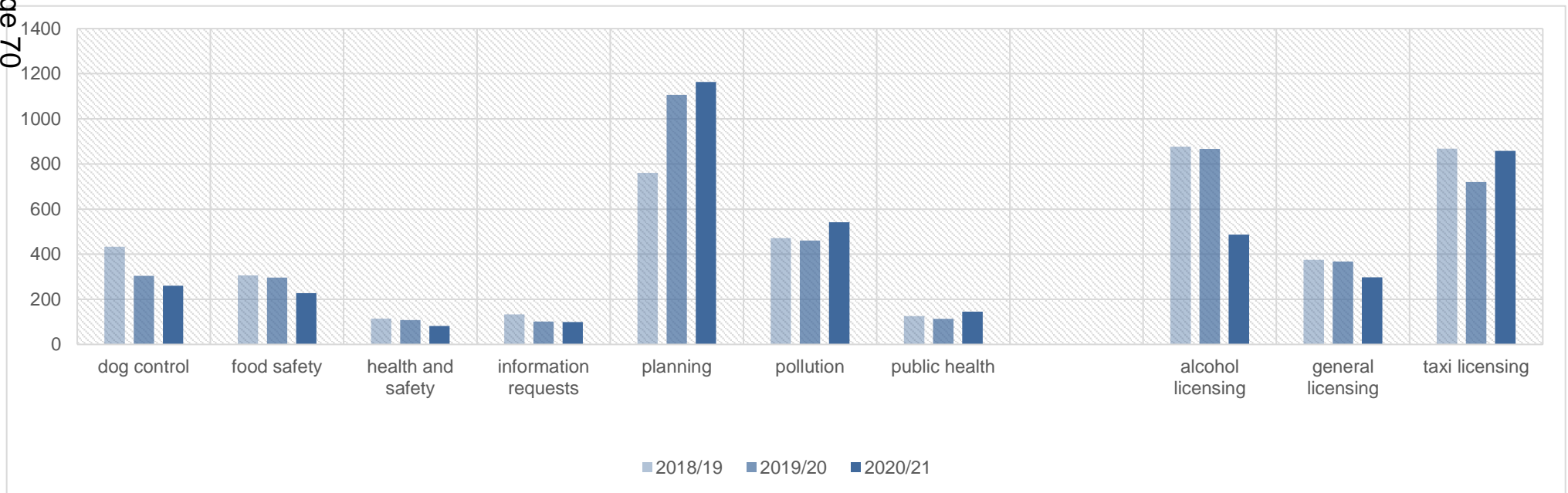


Appendix 5: District Council Summaries

The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the **Wychavon district**. The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS.

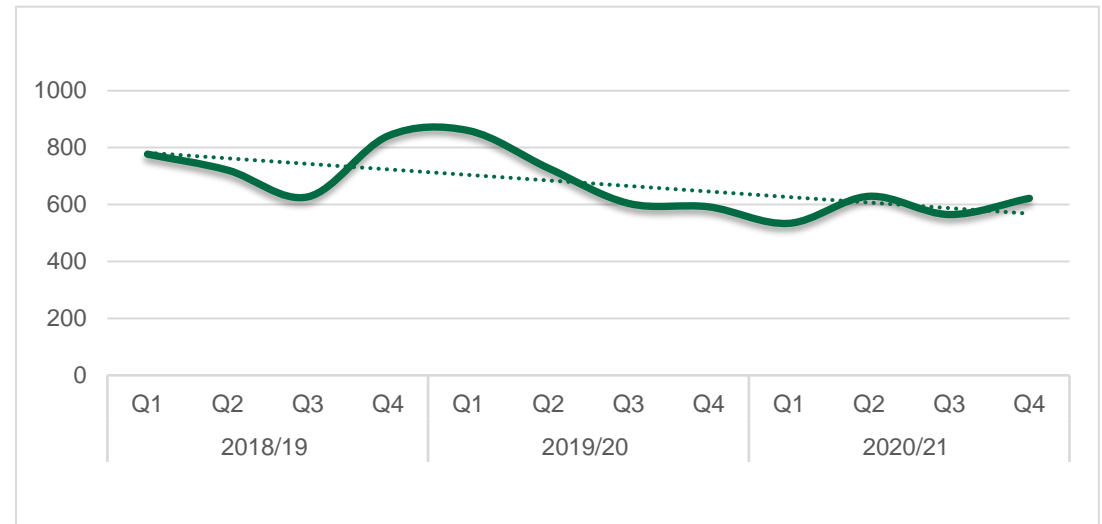


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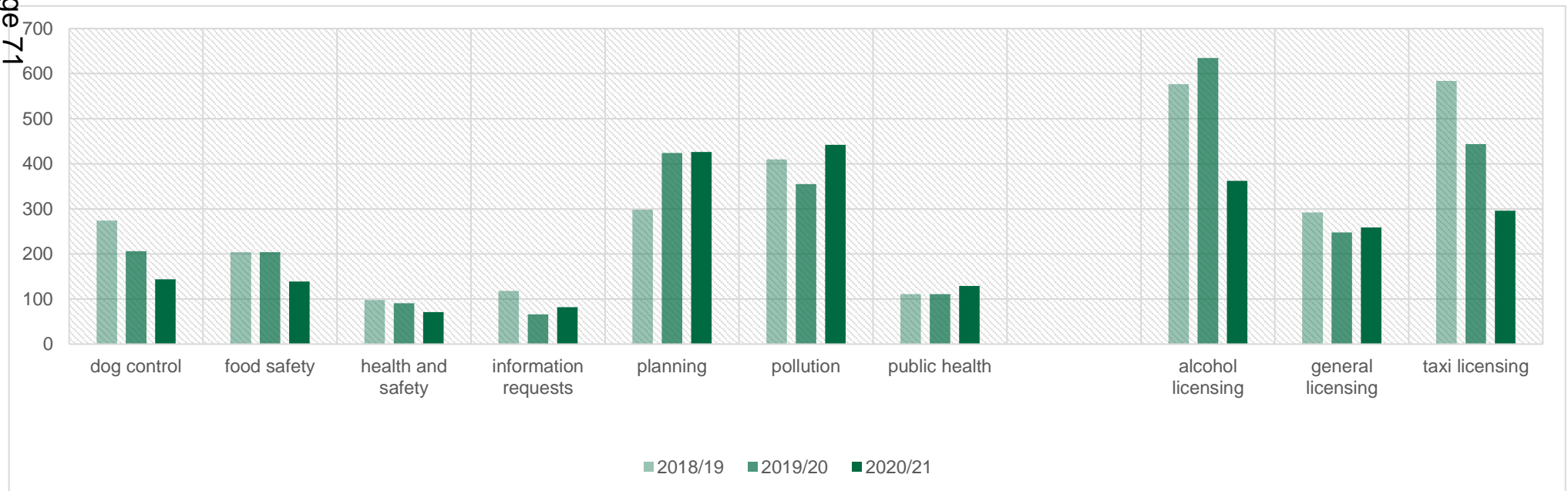


Appendix 5: District Council Summaries

The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the **Wyre Forest district**. The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS.



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WRS Board
24th June 2021

WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES REVENUE MONITORING APRIL – MARCH 2021 & ANNUAL RETURN

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board:

- 1.1 Note the final financial position for the period April – March 2021
- 1.2 Approve transfers to WRS Reserves of £30k to purchase dog warden van, £15k for DBS Checks & £25k for Food Inspections
- 1.3 Approve the 2020/21 refund of £78k to the participating Councils.

Council	Refund from 2020/21 £'000
Bromsgrove District Council	11
Malvern Hills District Council	10
Redditch Borough Council	14
Worcester City Council	13
Wychavon District Council	18
Wyre Forest District Council	12
Total	78

Contribution to Priorities

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

Introduction/Summary

This report presents the final financial position for Worcestershire Regulatory Services for the period April – March 2021. In addition a number of financial statements are appended to this report.

Background

During the financial year quarterly financial reports are presented for consideration by the Partners and the Board.

Report

The following reports are included for Board's Attention:

- Revenue Monitoring Statement 2020/21 - Appendix 1
- Annual Statement 2020/21 - Appendix 2
- Annual Statement Analysis 2020/21 – Appendix 3
- WRS Income Analysis 2020/21 – Appendix 4
- Reserve Statement – Appendix 5

Revenue Monitoring

The detailed revenue report is attached at Appendix 1. This shows a final outturn refund of £148k, this represents 4.6% of the actual budget and is mainly due to:-

- A significant underspend on the stray dog contracts due to the service dealing with fewer straying incidents. Likely to be related to people working from home due to the covid pandemic
- A number of aspects of planned expenditure also fell foul of the pandemic eg purchase of replacement vans.
- The deferment of some expenditure in licensing to help the trade manage financially during the pandemic.
- Any grant funded expenditure is shown separate to the core service costs as this is not funded by the participating Councils.
- As requested by this Board Appendix 1 details explanations relating to the variances.

Agenda Item 9

- It is proposed that the £148k is allocated as follows:-
 - i. To transfer to WRS Reserves:-
 - £30k to purchase a stray dog van
 - £15k for DBS Checks
 - £25k for Food Inspections
 - ii. The remaining £78k, is proposed to be refunded back to partners as per below:-

Bromsgrove District Council	£11,323
Malvern Hills District Council	£9,950
Redditch Borough Council	£13,636
Worcs City Council	£12,868
Wychavon District Council	£18,075
Wyre Forest District Council	£11,758

The refund to partners takes into account the adjustment for the overspend on Pest Control and all other charges to partners.

All partners have been advised of all recharges and refunds for completion of their statement of accounts.

Financial Implications

None other than those stated in the report

Sustainability

None as a direct result of this report

Contact Points

Chris Forrester –
chris.forrester@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk

Background Papers

Detailed financial business case

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WRS - Profit & Loss Report 2020-21

Total WRS Final Outturn 2020-21

Append 1

	Full Year Budget 20-21	Committed Expenditure Apr - Mar 21	Variance	
	£'000	£'000	£'000	
Direct Expenditure				
Employees				
Salary	2,851	2,689	-163	Savings due to employees working on projects eg Local Outbreak Response Team (LORT)
Agency Staff	0	113	113	Backfilling for employees working on projects
Employee Insurance	25	4	-20	
Sub-Total - Employees	2,876	2,806	-70	
Premises				
Rent / Hire of Premise	54	52	-2	
Cleaning	1	0	-0	
Utilities	0	0	0	
Sub-Total - Premises	55	53	-2	
Transport				
Vehicle Hire	13	1	-12	
Vehicle Fuel	8	5	-3	
Road Fund Tax	1	1	-0	
Vehicle Insurance	5	3	-1	
Vehicle Maintenance	3	4	1	
Car Allowances	75	45	-30	Due to covid related change in working patterns
Sub-Total - Transport	104	58	-46	
Supplies and Services				
Furniture & Equipment	32	42	10	Due to essential calibration on noise monitoring equipment
Clothes, uniforms and laundry	2	0	-2	
Printing & Photocopying	17	12	-5	
Postage	11	11	-0	
ICT	40	82	42	ICT refresh was required to stay security compliant and replace obsolete equipment
Telephones	21	14	-7	
Training & Seminars	23	10	-13	
Insurance	20	14	-6	
Third Party Payments	144	144	0	£100k BDC hosting / £44k WFDC ICT hosting
Sub-Total - Supplies & Service	309	328	19	

WRS - Profit & Loss Report 2020-21

Total WRS Final Outturn 2020-21

	Full Year Budget 20-21	Committed Expenditure Apr - Mar 21	Variance	
Contractors				
Dog Warden	145	39	-106	Due to reduction in dogs straying, OOH dog warden has been taken in house.
Pest Control	50	75	25	Due to additional costs relating to Gull Control & Pest Control which is charged to relevant partners and offset in the income line
Taxi / Alcohol / & Other Licensing	62	32	-30	Delay in DBS checks due to Covid & deferment of taxi tests
Other contractors/consultants	3	3	0	
Water Safety	5	1	-4	
Food Safety	1	0	-1	
Environmental Protection	10	43	33	Bereavement / Works in Default to be charged to relevant partners, offset in Income
Grants / Subscriptions	13	16	3	
Advertising, Publicity and Promotion	6	0	-5	
Sub-Total	293	209	-83	
Income				
Training Courses / Bereavement / Works in Default / Sewer Baiting etc	-440	-405	34	See Append 4
Sub-Total	-440	-405	34	
Service Total	3,197	3,049	-148	
To be recommended				
Refunded to Partners	0	78	78	
Stray Dog Van Reserve	0	30	30	
DBS Check Reserve	0	15	15	
Food Inspections Reserve	0	25	25	
Sub-Total	0	148	148	
Net Position	3,197	3,197	-0	

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Append 2

Worcestershire Regulatory Services
Annual Return For Year Ended 31st March 2021

Accounting Statement For Worcester Regulatory Services

Year ending

	31st March 2020	31st March 2020 Re-Stated	31st March 2021
	£	£	£
1 Balances brought forward	264,489	264,489	238,900
2 (+) Income from local taxation and / or levy	0	0	0
3 (+) Total other receipts	3,608,711	3,608,711	3,931,376
4 (-) Staff costs	2,776,843	2,868,301	3,241,718 Grant related work for Covid amounted to an additional £378k of staff costs
5 (-) Loan interest / capital repayments	0	0	0
6 (-) All other payments	857,457	765,999	605,885
7 (=) Balances carried forward	238,900	238,900	322,673

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Regulatory Services Income received 20-21

Income from Partners

	£
Budget	3,197,210
Refund of Savings	-77,610
Pension Deficit	29,200
Bereavement/ Public Burials	35,360
Marlpool - Redditch	3,498
Pest Control Overspend - Wychavon & Redditch	13,035
Taxi Tests - Worcs City	1,400
Employee for Animal Activity	28,640
Employee for Primary Authority Work	8,669
Employee for Additional Gull Work - Worcs City	35,000
	<u>3,274,402</u>

Grant Income

	£
Healthy Eating	626
Worcestershire Works Well	20,000
Covid Grant - Track & Trace	138,892
Covid Grant - Covid Advisors	217,981
Covid Grant - WRS Loss to Follow Up	29,095
Severn Trent - Sewer Baiting	14,151
	<u>420,745</u>

Other Income

	£
Stray Dog Income	22,532
County - Mgmt / Admin / Legal etc	55,550
County - Safety at Sport Grounds	12,000
External Intelligence Support	5,000
Planning Support Work	35,396
Contaminated Land Work	34,404
PPC Work	9,053
MOD Contract	20,000
Primary Authority work	2,281
Training / Risk Assessments of Water Supplies / Burials etc	3,550
Vet Fee Inspection Costs Recovered	18,430
Pest Control	3,544
Food Training Courses / Certificates / Food Hygiene Rating	6,850
Licensing - Pre-App Advice	230
Savings incurred due to Bromsgrove District Council paying for forward funding pension costs 3 years in advance	7,000
Taxi Admin Work / Taxi Database / Victorian Fayre / Trans Tapes	410
	<u>236,230</u>

Total Box 3 Accounting Statement

3,931,376

Regulatory Services Employees 20-21

Box 4

Employees Related Costs	3,241,718
	<u>3,241,718</u>

Regulatory Services Other Costs 20-21

Box 6

Premise Related Cost	52,654
Transport Related Cost	13,671
Supplies & Service	539,560
	<u>605,885</u>

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Worcestershire Regulatory Services Income Received 20-21

Income from Partners	£
Budget	3,197,210
Refund of Savings	-77,610
Pension Backfunding	29,200
Bereavement/ Public Burials	35,360
Marlpool - Redditch	3,498
Pest Control Overspend - Wychavon & Redditch	13,035
Taxi Tests Gemini - Worcs City	1,400
Employee for Animal Activity	28,640
Employee for Income Generation Officer	8,669
Employee for Additional Gull Work - Worcs City	35,000
	<u><u>3,274,401</u></u>
 Grant Income	 £
Severn Trent - Sewer Baiting	14,151
	<u><u>14,151</u></u>
 Other Income	 £
Stray Dog Income	22,532
County - Mgmt / Admin / Legal etc	55,550
County - Safety at Sport Grounds work	12,000
External Intelligence Support	5,000
Planning Support Work	34,527
Contaminated Land Work	34,404
PPC Work	9,921
MOD Contract	20,000
Primary Authority work	2,281
Training / Risk Assessments of Water Supplies / Burials etc	3,550
Vet Fee Inspection Costs Recovered	18,430
Food Training Courses / Certificates / Food Hygiene Rating	6,850
Licensing - Pre-App Advice	230
Pest Control	3,544
Taxi Admin Work	410
Savings incurred due to Bromsgrove District Council paying for forward funding pension costs 3 years in advance	7,000
	<u><u>236,229</u></u>
 Total Income	 <u><u>3,524,782</u></u>
 2020/21 Base Budget from Partners	 -3,119,600
 Total Income Excluding Budget	 405,182

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Worcestershire Regulatory Services Reserve Statement - 2020-21

Append 5

Worcestershire Regulatory Services 20-21

Earmarked Reserve	Balance 1st April 2020	Transfers Out 2020/21	Transfers In 2020/21	Balance 31st March 2021
	£	£	£	£
Worcs Works Well	31,701	-3,531	20,000	48,170
LEP	12,693	-1,697		10,997
WRS General Reserve	130,647			130,647
Better Business For All	3,859	-1,000		2,859
Stray Dog Van	20,000		30,000	50,000
Brexit	40,000			40,000
DBS Checks			15,000	15,000
Food Inspections			25,000	25,000
Total	238,900	-6,228	90,000	322,672
Conditional Reserve	5,849	-626		5,223
Total Earmark Reserve & Conditional Reserve	244,749	-6,853	90,000	327,895

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Worcestershire Regulatory Services

Supporting and protecting you

WRS Board

Date: 24th June 2021

Title: Activity and Performance Data Quarters 1, 2 3 and 4 2020/21

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 final quarter of 2020/21 but the actual data allows comparison with previous quarters and previous years.

Contribution to Priorities

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

Report

Activity Data

The final quarter of 2020/21 featured a third lockdown, based on the same legal framework as the one in November, so not akin to lockdown 1 at the beginning of the financial year. As with previous quarters, officers dealing with Covid have had to respond to and adjust activities to accommodate a rapidly changing regulatory framework as changes to the regime can occur with little notice. This was whilst continuing to manage business as usual activity like nuisance complaints.

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) suspended the 'Food Hygiene inspection' programme at the beginning of lockdown in March and this continued throughout the year. The service was, however expected to deliver on a range of activities, focused only on the highest risk businesses and, in some cases, this was done alongside Covid control visits. Numbers of interventions for the year have inevitably remained low in comparison to previous years, reflecting that the service was engaged mainly with new entrants to the sector, those wanting re-rating and those that posed the highest hygiene risk locally. All allegations of serious non-compliance have been and will continue to be followed up but thankfully these continued to be relatively few in number. As members will see from one of the other

papers at this meeting, the service is now planning how to follow the FSA's roadmap back to normal food controls.

Even with the increase in reported issues during Q3 and 4, 2020/21 was a relatively quiet year for new Health and Safety interventions. Although a proportion related to Covid outbreaks at business premises, it seems likely that the lockdown related closure of many local authority-regulated businesses may have limited the need for us to intervene. Two significant cases went to court and results were reported in the press.

Although Q4 showed an increase in dog related complaints, overall it was a quiet year for this work and the downward trend in stray dog numbers has continued. Both remain indicative of improved conduct of owners however concerns remain that the economic difficulties that will ultimately follow from the pandemic might lead to a spike in dog abandonment. Time will tell.

The Q4 lockdown led to a plateauing of license applications. The number of licensing cases reported to WRS during the year is a reduction of 21% and 40% compared to previous years. With the hospitality sector and night time economy significantly affected by COVID 19 restrictions however, this has led to a significant reduction in the volume of alcohol licensing applications; particularly temporary event notices Overall, just over half of cases dealt with by the team have been applications and registrations; with 38% of these cases relating to hackney carriage and private hire trades.

Generally, WRS receives a higher number of enquiries about licensing matters than complaints about licensed or unlicensed activity. Based on the 498 complaints received this year, 38% related to alcohol and entertainment, whilst 25% related to taxis and 18% to the animal activity regime

Quarter 4 saw planning application numbers plateau. The number of planning enquiries recorded by WRS during the year is an increase of 12% compared to 2018/19 but a reduction of 7% compared to 2019/20. Whilst there has been fluctuation in the number of enquiries, the type of cases has remained relatively consistent. Approximately 91% were consultations, whilst 52% related to contaminated land. A fifth of planning enquiries were completed, on a contractual basis, on behalf of other local authorities.

Information requests, often associated with the planning and development process also continued an upward trajectory throughout Q4, supplemented by requests for information about the Covid response.

Following the drop in Q3, Q4 saw an increase in numbers of nuisance complaints despite the cold weather. A similar pattern in domestic nuisance reporting was seen during lockdown 1, so it likely that people experienced more issues at home than they would normally as they would be at work. The number of pollution cases recorded by WRS this year is an increase of 23% and 10% compared to previous years. Approximately 43% of cases have related to domestic noise, whilst 21% have related to smoke nuisance. A significant proportion of the latter has related to domestic bonfires, with a smaller proportion relating to the burning of commercial waste. Whilst COVID-19 restrictions are a notable factor in the level of

domestic nuisance, good weather remains the major driver behind numbers overall for the year.

As we have reported previously, our business as usual services continue to be delivered against the background of the service having a significant staff commitment to the pandemic response. Your officers responding to the challenging pandemic and equally those who continue to manage and deliver the normal day to day activities on the front line deserve a huge amount of praise at a time when things are far from normal and they are continually tested beyond anything that professions have encountered in our lifetime.

Covid related activities

Covid related enforcement activities continued through the quarter. EHOs embedded within the Local Outbreak Response Team remained busy tackling business outbreaks and undertaking detailed backwards contact tracing exercises in areas with high case numbers. Covid related enforcement activities continued with officers regularly undertaking pro-active out of hours work in evenings and at weekends to check on who was open or closed and how takeaway work was being managed. There was much good practice seen as most businesses tried to meet the requirements.

Covid Advisors were out daily in most parts of the county but focusing on those areas where case numbers were highest. Board members were included in the weekly email update on what was found and how this new team was dealing with the public, reminding them of what to do. On average, over 500 businesses and over 1000 members of the public have been spoken to each week by the team. Lost to follow-up, where we deal with the contact tracing of those who the national system had missed, as very busy during the early part of the quarter when case numbers were very high. Officers worked closely with district colleagues in a number of the Councils to door-knock those who did not reply to our local telephone calls. Seldom a week would go by when one or more referrals was made to the police where people appeared not to be isolating as required. Fortunately, these numbers remained relatively small throughout.

Performance

The year ended reasonably well from a customer satisfaction perspective with the non-business customer measure at 74% and business customers at 98.4%. Given the demands and pressures on the service this year, this has to be seen as positive. Customer satisfaction last year was at 69.5% overall and business satisfaction at 97.4%. People who felt better equipped to deal with issues ended the year at 68.2%, above the 58.1% that it was last year.

Covid made it very difficult to run proactive taxi enforcement projects during the year and, as Council garages closed for much of lockdown and have intermittently been open for business during the year, there is

very limited data to show the proportion of vehicles found to be defective whilst in service. It may be sensible to treat this year as so unusual that this measure would tell us little about the general state of the fleet. Officers are already programming more enforcement work for 2021/22 and we will have detailed conversations with garages to ensure that all data on failed tests is supplied this year.

Compliments outnumber complaints by around 4:1 (161:42) very similar to last year. Staff sickness is down at 1.9 days per FTE. This includes additional temporary staff taken on for pandemic response. This is half the figure in the previous 12 months and is probably reflective of the ease of people working on days when they are not well enough to travel to the office but well enough to work at home. Again, this should probably be treated as an exceptional result.

Staff satisfaction was at 93.5%. another good result with 30/50 staff who responded scoring the service as 8/10 or better to work for. Further work will be done during the year to look at more detailed feedback.

The proportion of businesses licensed under the 2003 Act (alcohol and entertainment,) allegedly not uphold the 4 licensing objectives averages out across the county at 5%, with Redditch at 8.3% and Malvern Hills at 3.5%. Looking at the numbers, this year appears to be on the low average side, possibly because many premises have been closed for much of the year due to the pandemic. Many premises have, however been open for takeaway and of course at times for wider operations under Covid restrictions.

Looking at figures for the rate of noise complaint per 1000 head of population, this unusual year appears to have been average to slightly above for nuisance complaints. We have said at several points in the year that noise complaints did increase, possibly because people were less aware of their environments during the day as they'd normally be away at work. It still suggests however, that overall, the environment for Worcestershire residents is good.

Total income is down slightly on last year at £405,000, meaning the measure at 13.42% is also slightly down on last year's 14.65%. given that many of our regular customers for planning work did not ask for much during the first lockdown in particular, this remains a reasonable level of performance.

The overall cost of the service, therefore, is also slightly up on last year at £5.07 per had of population compared with £5.00 last year. Focus on income generation can be restored once the pandemic response is over.

Contact Points

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Kiran.Lahel@worcsregservices.gov.uk

Background Papers

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

Appendix B: Performance indicator table

Table of PIs 2020/21

Indicator	Reporting period	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4/ Outrun
1. % of service requests where resolution is achieved to customers satisfaction	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	74.6	75.4	73.6	74.0
2. % of service requests where resolution is achieved to business satisfaction	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	99.3	97.7	98.1	98.4
3. % businesses broadly compliant at first assessment/ inspection	Annually	98.3	Bromsgrove 98.6 Malvern Hills 98.6 Redditch 97.7 Worcester City 98.3 Wychavon 99.1 Wyre Forest 98.2 Worcestershire 98.5	98.4	Bromsgrove 98.4% Malvern Hills 98.6% Redditch 97.6% Worcester City 98.4% Wychavon 99.2% Wyre Forest 98.2% Worcestershire 98.5%
4. % of food businesses scoring 0,1 or 2 at 1 st April each year	Annually	1.7	1.5	1.6	1.5
5 % of drivers licence renewal applications issued within 5 working days of receipt of a complete application	6-monthly	NA	97.4	NA	96.9%
6 % of vehicles found to be defective whilst in service Number of vehicles found to be defective by district and the percentage this	6-monthly	NA	As Council garages closed for much of lockdown and have only recently re-opened for business, at this stage there is no meaning full data for this measure. Enforcement capacity is currently focused on	NA	6 = 0.3% of 1514 vehicles on the road county-wide BDC 0 MHDC 0 RBC 6 WC 0

Agenda Item 10

	represents of the fleet county-wide			Covid compliance in licensed premises so no taxi stop checks.		WDC 0 WFDC 0
7	% of service requests where customer indicates they feel better equipped to deal with issues themselves in future	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	63.2	72.3	67.5	68.2
8	Review of register of complaints/compliments	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	6/18	24/ 78	31/120	42/161
9	Annual staff sickness absence at public sector average or better	Quarterly NB: figure is cumulative	0.61 days per FTE	0.95 days per FTE	1.65 days per FTE	1.9 days per FTE
10	% of staff who enjoy working for WRS	Annually	NA	NA	NA	93.5%
11	% of licensed businesses subject to allegations of not upholding the 4 licensing objectives	6-monthly	NA	Bromsgrove 4.0 Malvern Hills 3.0 Redditch 8.3 Worcester City 4.5 Wychavon 3.3 Wyre Forest 4.5 Worcestershire 4.3	NA	Bromsgrove 5.4% Malvern Hills 3.5% Redditch 8.3% Worcester City 5.7% Wychavon 3.7% Wyre Forest 5.1% Worcestershire 5.0%
12	Rate of noise complaint per 1000 head of population	6-monthly	NA	Bromsgrove 0.98 Malvern Hills 0.84 Redditch 1.20 Worcester City 1.16 Wychavon 0.64 Wyre Forest 0.86 Worcestershire 0.94	NA	Bromsgrove 2.56 Malvern Hills 2.45 Redditch 3.67 Worcester City 3.10 Wychavon 2.08 Wyre Forest 2.71 Worcestershire 2.74
13	Total income expressed as a % of district base revenue	6-monthly	NA	4.37% (i.e. £131,901/£3,017,00)	NA	13.42% Note: £405,00 as a % of previous budget of £3.017M Using the current budget

Agenda Item 10

budget (16/17)					the figure yielded is 12.67%
14 Cost of regulatory services per head of population (Calculation will offset income against revenue budget)	Annually	NA	NA	NA	Based on outrun cost of £3.049M against the current ONS population estimate of 601,113 the service cost is: £5.07 per head

Worcestershire
Regulatory Services

Supporting and protecting you

Activity Report | 2020-21



Bromsgrove
District Council
www.bromsgrove.gov.uk



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



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



Worcester
CITY COUNCIL



WYCHAVON
DISTRICT COUNCIL
good services, good value



Wyre Forest
District Council

Foreword

Welcome to the fourth and final activity data report for 2020/21.

This shows the full year and what a year it has been, for good and ill. The team has put in a massive shift when it comes to our role in controlling the pandemic. Officers have worked incredibly hard to deliver the business control regime, both tackling non-compliance and supporting the re-opening process at the end of each lockdown. They have done this without fear or favour and, given the majority of it was achieved through dialogue and support, without the need to resort to formal action, I hope you will agree that this has been a success.

The Covid Advisor work has been tremendous and the people working under the WRS banner across the county have provided much needed support to businesses and communities. This was never a situation where "policing" would provide all the answers and the gentle nudge has helped in many locations. Also, not forgetting out lost to follow-up work where we have been the local contact tracing team, picking up the telephony process when the national system doesn't deliver and working with our district colleagues to go knock on doors when its been necessary. Again, we have managed a good deal of successes and data has been uploaded to the national tracing system.

What left our business as usual work, which is the focus of this document and as you will see from this report didn't go away. Whilst the Food Standards Agency suspended routine work, some food issues still had to be addressed. Accidents continued to happen in workplaces that were open, indeed we saw a slight increase, possibly down to staff having to follow less familiar routines and practices. People definitely continued to complain about noise and other sources of nuisance as you will see, although there was a reduction during the winter, as normal, which picked up as the weather began to improve.

Whilst there may have been a lull in the planning system during the first lockdown, that hasn't been the case subsequently and the number of applications requiring our input has remained high. Likewise with information requests, during lockdown it was quiet but as the economy re-opened so have the floodgates for Freedom of Information and Environmental Information requests. Licensing complaints and enquiries returned to the normal trajectory line by the end of Q3 and numbers of applications definitely increased as the Government's roadmap for re-opening continued, and this has increased further since the turn of the financial year with many premises looking to pick up with temporary events during the Summer.

So a very busy year for everyone, working through the most difficult of times. We hope you find the report interesting and if you've any questions please do contact myself or one of the Management team.



Simon Wilkes
Head of Regulatory Services

Community Environmental Health

In addition to the regular work carried out by the team and reported in the following pages, the focus for Q1 has been responding to the significant additional responsibilities brought about by the Covid-19 Pandemic.

The first phase of response from the Community Environmental Health Team was to make proactive checks that businesses were closed. Officers were tasked to undertake patrols to check that businesses were closed and over 2,000 visits were made countywide. Compliance was generally high, though Prohibition Notices had to be served in respect of 14 premises.

The team responded to over 500 service requests, providing support and advice to businesses, investigating reports of businesses trading despite restrictions, or trading in a manner that breached restrictions. This task was particularly onerous as the rules and regulations were subject to regular change at extremely short notice, requiring a high level of professionalism from Officers in keeping abreast of the changes in legislation and applying them practically in assisting businesses to comply.

Projects were undertaken relating to the takeaway sector, the control of legionella, garden centres, outdoor markets and golf courses to support business compliance with the Covid regulations.

In Q1 we began to engage with the local outbreak management process that is seen as the key mechanism for controlling the spread of Covid 19 going forward. Our main focus is likely to be outbreaks at those workplace settings where our Health and Safety at Work role is relevant, but beyond this WRS Officers are likely to be involved in outbreaks at schools, care homes and the larger high risk businesses enforced by HSE due to our expertise in communicable disease control.

The Teams have also been working with Economic Development and Town Centre management teams to support the delivery of grant funding to those eligible for either Council or Government financial support packages, assist in recovery plans for city centre and town centre businesses and provide advice and support for businesses in respect of safe working practices and government guidance. The Team has also made regular contributions to the County Covid Business Support Group.

The Food Standards Agency suspended all routine food inspection work in Q1. However, we have continued an ongoing dialogue with businesses, particularly those posing the highest risk and new registrations. We will still conduct safe visits where there appears to be an issue, but to date such intervention has not been required.

There have also been fewer food complaints as pubs and restaurants remained closed. We continued to try and re-rate businesses under the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme wherever possible and appropriate, such as where they had completed structural works or introduced food safety management systems to address a low rating or those who needed an initial rating having recently opened. To assist in this we piloted novel methods of working such as virtual visits by video call to be followed up with physical visits when permitted.

Despite lockdown restrictions we continued to provide an Export Certificate service without extended delays which enabled our major exporters to trade as normal.

This has allowed us to concentrate on our Engage/Educate/Encourage/Enforce approach to implementing the Health Protection Regulations, supported by targeted patrols, intelligence-led investigations and the excellent relationships forged through close liaison with the local Policing Teams.

A significant increase in specific types of complaints was noted in Q1, namely those relating to domestic noise, smoke nuisance and of course, alleged breaches of the COVID-19 Regulations. The former two may simply be down to the fact people were at home and being annoyed by things that they wouldn't normally encounter as they would be at work during the day. We have already re-configured officer roles in the service to meet Covid and statutory responsibilities whilst delivering on your service priorities and will continue to be as flexible as possible in moving people around in response to differing demands in a quickly changing regulatory environment.

Licensing

We started the quarter facing the challenges of the Covid pandemic and looking to work smarter and more efficiently; not only by changing processes but finding ways to communicate with licensed premise holders and the taxi trade in a relatively short space of time using alternative channels of communication.

Working across all the Districts, we looked at opportunities to help the taxi trade in such unprecedented circumstances and implemented a deferral process which gave drivers an opportunity to defer the renewal of their license for up to 6 months. This allowed them to then renew rather than have to re-apply for a new license within a six month window. This scheme will end in September 2020.

WRS licensing officers have had to adapt and change the way applications and correspondence were received from applicants including the paying of fees and we shifted everything to being online, via email or providing advice and guidance over the telephone due to the temporary suspension of licensing surgeries. This was a challenge for a lot of our customers, especially the taxi trade, but overall was well received and welcomed as a alternative way of doing things in the current climate.

Throughout the quarter we endeavored to provide information whether it was by email, newsletter or updates to the website to all current and prospective licence holders to ensure they were fully aware of changes to the regulations. Due to frequency of changes occurring, we wanted to ensure they were fully aware and kept as up to date as possible.

Animal licensing was also a key area where businesses were found to be struggling as people were not going away therefore boarding kennels were empty. In addition, officers were not able to go out and do inspections. We therefore mirrored the same deferral process that we put in place for the taxi trade for these businesses and again this will end at the end of September 2020.

Overall it has been a fast paced learning journey for the licensing team and no doubt the next quarter will bring its own challenges and encounters along the way.

Community Environmental Health

The focus for Q2 has been responding to the significant additional responsibilities brought about by the Covid-19 Pandemic whilst maintaining the service for investigating statutory nuisances.

In respect of demand, the team dealt with over 900 Covid-related service requests and incidents across the County between 1 July 2020 and 30 September 2020 inclusive.

Worcestershire's Local Outbreak Response Team (LORT) was established on 1 July 2020, when Worcestershire's Outbreak Control Plan was published. It comprises of WRS Environmental Health Officers and Public Health Practitioners operating under the direction of the Director of Public Health.

We continued to build on the local outbreak management process throughout Q2 that is seen as the key mechanism for controlling the spread of Covid 19 going forward, developing our outbreak investigation and back-tracing response where WRS expertise in communicable disease control and health and safety at work is proving invaluable. Beyond this WRS Officers continue to support investigations into outbreaks at schools, care homes and the larger high risk businesses enforced by HSE.

The arrangement was immediately called into action when the team was asked to support Herefordshire Public Health in their investigation into a major farm outbreak on the county border, where over 100 Covid cases were identified in overseas workers. The epidemic continues to create major learning curves for all and the lessons learned from the Herefordshire incident were soon put to the test with two outbreaks in Worcestershire, the first at a food packaging firm which distributes vegetables and salad products and the second at a large food manufacturer.

In September officers were involved in providing advice and guidance to a public house in Welland where two members of staff and a member of the public were found to be infected. This generated social media interest and this contrasting small business outbreak demonstrates that Covid can affect any workplace setting. Hence investigations are supplemented by an ongoing WRS programme of providing targeted business advice and support countywide, particularly in respect of the hospitality sector, to help ensure Covid safe workplaces and businesses.

All routine food inspection work remained suspended in Q2; however, we have continued an ongoing dialogue with businesses, particularly those posing the highest risk and new registrations. We will still conduct safe visits where there appears to be an issue, but to date such intervention has not been required.

Further detail on our Covid response and the work of the Local Outbreak Response Team can be found in the information reports presented to Board:

Joint working with Public Health to control Covid-19 Outbreaks in work settings 1 October 2020;

Covid-19 Response 18 June 2020;

Licensing

The easing of lockdown measures towards the end of Q1 allowed Licensing to move towards a transition phase, doing more 'business as usual' activity. Most of the processes introduced during Q1 were still kept in force as the move towards online applications and providing advice remotely was, and continues to, work well. The biggest challenge faced by the team this quarter was the introduction of the Building and Planning Act 2020 whereby the team had to work at fast pace to introduce Pavement Licensing across all districts in a very short time frame. The expertise of the team, in collaboration with all the districts, allowed for WRS to be ahead of the game and implement these requirements ahead of schedule.

The team started to get out more this quarter in a number of areas. They looked at being more proactive with puppy breeding investigations in light of Lucy's Law that was introduced in April 2020 and this area of work has continued to raise awareness especially due to the fact more people have been at home due to lockdown and finding other sources of generating income. Animal inspections commenced and officers also attended three Zoo inspections across the districts in Bromsgrove, Wychavon and Wyre Forest.

The team proactively worked with Community Environmental Health on enforcement activity, mainly in the night time economy, and ensuring licensed premises were adhering to covid standards.

We ended the quarter with getting face to face licensing appointments underway and have been working with all the districts so that these can commence in a safe and proactive way.

Technical Services

In the second quarter the dog warden team have once again been busy we have received contact about over 300 dogs, 17 of which were reported as lost or loose. WRS was successful in reuniting 214 dogs with their owners and rehoming 30 with recognised animal rehoming charities. We cared for three dogs while their owners have been in hospital one of which is now back with their owner. Sadly one dog reported to us was found deceased.

Community Environmental Health

COVID-19

The CEH team of four officers, dedicated to supporting Worcestershire Public Health with investigations in workplaces, dealt with 190 service requests from the LORT (Local Outbreak Response Team). These involved a wide range of premises from the hospitality sector seeking advice about good practice, the Tier system and November lockdown to complaints about lack of adequate Covid controls. We also investigated links to outbreaks across a whole range of business settings. During September, October and November positive cases reported tended to be low numbers but as we moved into December we started to receive reports of multiple numbers affected. In early December, we sent out information to all our registered 'wet bars' advising them of Covid controls required and how they needed to comply with food law now they were required to offer a 'substantial meal' with alcohol service. As the Board will be aware, many struggled to comply with this requirement leading to much negative publicity.

Officers continue to interpret the ever-changing legislation and guidance in order to support businesses to operate in a COVID secure manner. Advice has been well received and the business sectors affected by closure or significant adaptations to their operating models have in the vast majority of cases acted positively and appropriately to achieve compliance. Where businesses have failed to comply with the legislation, officers have issued prohibition notices. Challenges from traders and their solicitors have been forthcoming but in each case the service has maintained a robust position to protect the public health.

Food Safety

We continue to receive new Food Premises Registrations. In our third quarter, 215 new businesses registered; the majority being small home enterprises although we also continue to receive new high street applicants. In accordance with FSA guidance we are not carrying out routine food visits other than where we have identified there to be a major public health risk either from previous history, a complaint or through our intel systems. We also assess risk by sending a questionnaire to all new businesses to help us identify type of food being produced. This system also continues to be used for maintaining contact with our very low risk businesses and we continue to receive a good response to questionnaires. In many cases we are able to give a business a hygiene rating from the information provided, in others we will verify information by phone or a visit. We have continued to carry out remote inspections of some premises but the demand on resources from Covid work has limited this work. In December we were able to recruit the equivalent of one FTE to solely concentrate on food work going forward.

Food officers also spent time working with NeoKare Nutrition (Redditch) a new food factory producing processed human baby milk. The company, who have a factory in India, were recommended to the county by the FSA/DTI. It is the first private business of this type to operate in the UK and has been a learning curve for all parties. Their long term plan is to export the produce throughout Europe.

In December we welcomed two new Primary Authorities – Alimenti (Malvern) a small food consultancy and Mindful Chef (Redditch) a web based healthy meals provider who have trebled their business in the past year. Our Food Lead also became heavily involved in Brexit preparations for food businesses attending various webinars and having to deal with a constantly changing landscape of information.

Nuisance

Whilst demand for nuisance investigations usually falls significantly during Q3, this year we experienced a further spike in demand, believed to be due to lockdown leading to more people working from home where they are then noticing a variety of issues including noise, smoke from bonfires and from log-burners, and light nuisance from security lighting and in one case from a large animated advertising display screen. Lockdown appears also to have led to reduced tolerance of some unavoidable noise sources such as construction site noise, even where this is taking place during normal daytime working hours. We have also seen significant numbers of complaints about rodent activity, possibly exacerbated by the relatively mild weather conditions during Q3.

An appeal against an abatement notice relating to noise from a large distribution centre was lodged, and we have prepared a case for the appeal hearing, however the company appears to have decided to take steps instead to comply with the notice, and has employed an acoustic consultant to assist them with this with whom our officers are working to achieve a resolution. The legal process is currently on hold pending the outcome of the works, and we are optimistic that a satisfactory noise reduction can be achieved by the measures proposed.

Two prosecution files in relation to noise from barking dogs are awaiting trial dates – the first has been adjourned a number of times already due to large backlogs of cases in the courts due to covid-19 restricting courts ability to deal with cases.

A number of notices have been served during the period in relation to such diverse issues as noise nuisance, accumulations of waste causing pest problems, light nuisance and inadequate drainage systems

Health and Safety

Two lengthy and complex investigations were concluded in Q3 with prosecution files being submitted to the relevant partner legal teams. These relate to serious injuries sustained at a workplace and a fatality in connection with leisure activities.

An investigation into a serious accident at a hotel in Droitwich was concluded by the company accepting a Simple Caution. This is an admission of guilt which is placed on record and may be considered by a Court in the event of any future contraventions.

Regulated premises across the County have been contacted with guidance regarding the controlling of crowds being issues in relation to COVID security.

Licensing

The quarter commenced with the majority of licensed premises being able to open including those that required personal licenses as the relaxation of restrictions in quarter two followed through into quarter three.

Many district buildings re-opened allowing licensing appointments to commence allowing new driver applications and knowledge and skills test to also re-commence even though be it was only for a short time as in November we were plunged into tier restrictions which meant some of these duties once again had to be parked.

Work commenced on the Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards that were introduced by the DFT earlier this year and reports were circulated to all committees where appropriate and the WRS Board. Whilst the focus of these standards is on protecting children and vulnerable adults, all passengers will benefit from the recommendations, which aim to better regulate the taxi and PHV sector.

In October, there was a national Scrap Metal week of action and on Thursday 15th October the team supported the Police, environment agency, VOSA and the civil enforcement team at Wyre Forest District Council to help out with a day of action. Roadside checks for collectors and visits to known scrap metal sites were undertaken. Encouragingly there were no significant issues found and good links were made with a number of agencies for future work and investigations.

The Licensing team launched a intelligence operation looking at illegal puppy breeding and are using a intelligence based approach engaging with a number of other departments and agencies to look pragmatically at illegal puppy complaints including illegal breeding, noise and the illegal selling of puppies.

Throughout quarter three licensing officers have been supporting Community Environmental Health colleagues and West Mercia Police with the night time economy enforcement response as part of the WRS workstream specifically focusing on licensed premises and will continue to do so whilst COVID-19 restrictions remain in place.

Technical Services

Dog Control

The third quarter was fairly consistent with the second quarter, with the service having received contact in relation to 325 dog related matters; including enquiries for assistance or advice and complaints. Of the 306 dogs that were reported lost or found, 23 were lost and an additional 5 were reported as being loose. We were successful in reuniting 152 dogs with their owners, and rehoming 28 with recognised animal rehoming charities. In addition to this a number of press releases were issued in relation to warning potential new owners to take care when looking to buy a new dog from private sellers.

Community Environmental Health

At the start of Q4 the CEH officers embedded in the Public Health **Local Outbreak Response Team** (LORT) were at full stretch dealing with Covid outbreaks in businesses large and small. During the period, the agreement with HSE that we could deal with Covid measures at premises enforced by them continued to work well enabling officers to give Covid advice which might not have been otherwise available at short notice. Various projects were run to provide business support including advisory visits to commercial and industrial estates combined with letter drops providing updated advice and contact information. In general, most businesses had implemented good control measures and it was obvious that most of the infections had been picked up in the community. The exception was some small offices which decided on a full return to work for their employees only to find themselves having to close when most staff went down with Covid. Risk assessments were identified as poor and advice was given on improving control measures.

Our LORT team was also very involved in detailed backwards contact tracing of Covid cases to try and trace common sources of infection.

The LORT team leader spent considerable time working with the Three Counties Showground on re-planning a safe events programme for the first half of 2021 and also working with Worcester Racecourse on its recovery programme after a year in which it was not only flooded twice but also remained closed due to pandemic.

We saw the implementation of Operation Corona Fries, which targeted takeaway food premises with poor food hygiene standards (FHRS 0-2) and were considered likely to employ poor COVID-19 controls. An intelligence product recognised this correlation by using data provided by the COVID Advisors. 13 businesses were inspected for both food hygiene and COVID controls. Overall, COVID controls were found to have been satisfactorily implemented. Of the 13 businesses inspected, 6 maintained their poor FHRS rating indicating no improvement on prior performance, 6 had their FHRS score reduced, whilst one improved from a FHRS score of 2 to 3, which indicates the business is broadly compliant. Work with these businesses is ongoing to secure compliance.

The **food** programme, which has been virtually suspended since 2020 by the Food Standards Agency, gradually began to take a new shape to cope with the backlog of premises due visits, both existing and new. We added two new contractors during this period who have been able to make a small but not inconsiderable contribution to what is one of our main statutory functions. During this period officers in the CEH team were also involved in inspecting FHRS 0-2 premises. Regrettably, many of these premises had not improved, some had deteriorated with Hygiene Improvement Notices having to be served and two prosecutions identified. We also piloted a remote inspection platform with a view to using this to review selected Level 5 businesses as part of the catch-up programme during 2021.

The Principal Officer was also involved in supporting the Worcestershire LEP-driven “Make It Worcestershire” (MIW) recovery programme for the hospitality industry. MIW is essentially a promotional platform created by a partnership of the WLEP, the County and District Councils, the HWCC and WRS. WRS also put in a successful bid for some support funding from BEIS and made a presentation to an LGA webinar.

All our food **Primary Authorities** have survived the pandemic although most have been inactive for past year apart from Aspens whose main contracts are in schools.

The county's **wellbeing** at work scheme also restarted activity with a new set of standards and a contracted management scheme led by the Chamber of Commerce. WRS continues to have a role on the Steering Group and provides four representatives to support businesses already part of and new to the scheme.

Demand for **nuisance** investigations remained significantly higher than usual during Q4, presumably again due to lockdown leading to more people working from and spending more time at from home and therefore being affected by a range of nuisance problems. Noise remains the most prevalent issue, including barking dogs and amplified music, and complaints about smoke from bonfires remained high. Easing of lockdown restrictions led to a spike in complaints about noise from licensed premises. However, this had been anticipated by the service and many complaints were dealt with on the basis that some degree of extra noise was inevitable from premises having to carry on their operations almost entirely outdoors. The significant increase in complaints about rodent activity noted during Q3 appears to have tailed off during Q4, despite the winter being generally very mild. Sewer baiting operations carried out by WRS targeted complaint hotspots and appear to have had some success.

An appeal against an abatement notice relating to noise from loud amplified music played in the garden of a licensed premises in Redditch district has been lodged, and trial papers have been prepared for the two day hearing which is due to take place at Kidderminster Magistrates Court in July.

We are continuing to work with a business in Wychavon to assist them with complying with an abatement notice relating to noise from an automated car wash, following their written undertaking during court proceedings.

A prosecution for noise nuisance in respect of barking dogs in Wyre forest district February was successful and resulted in fines and costs totalling £764, with wide press coverage.

A further prosecution relating to barking dogs in Worcester City is due to go to trial in June at Worcester Magistrates court.

Numerous complaints were received relating to light nuisance from upgraded lighting at a major supermarket in Malvern Hills district and following our intervention, the supermarket agreed to revise the lighting to the satisfaction of the affected residents.

Licensing

We started the quarter with another lockdown which after some optimism felt from licensed premises and the taxi trade over the December period caused again some worries and concerns from all different parts of the trade. In light of this we continued to work with districts to support both premisses license fees, animal licence and taxi renewal deferrals with extension periods until the end of March 2021.

We had a new member of the team join us as a Licensing Technical officer after one of our officers moved to work in the Trading Standards team but all was not lost as we have used this to our advantage and encompassed a joint working approach with our Trading Standards colleagues. There are a number of joint operations in the pipeline including test purchases at premises with a suspended licence for both illicit tobacco and alcohol.

The long awaited Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Standards draft policy proposals started to make their way through the Licensing Committee process with all Bromsgrove District Council, Redditch Borough, Wychavon District Council and Malvern District Council were first to be presented to members and go through to consultation. The remaining districts will be presented over the next few months with implementation early 2022.

Applications for licenses slightly reduced in Q4 but this is no different to previous years as January and February have always been quieter months for applications. We did however have a surge in enquiries related to personal licences and this has been a trend throughout the year as a result of the roadmap out of lockdown.

There were two inspections carried out at the West Midlands Safari Park to ensure the animal enclosures and new renovation plans were ready to re-open on April 12th and the Park had worked tirelessly in lockdown to ensure these were up to the standards we require.

As the roadmap to lockdown commenced on 12th April the team have been working closely with licensed premises and the CEH team to ensure compliance through regularly communications and enforcement activity.

Dog Wardens

In the last quarter the dog warden team have seen a slight reduction in the number of reports received, with a total of 201 contacts to the service, of which 66 were reported as lost or loose. In total 69 dogs of the 201 reported to us had no form of identification. WRS was successful in reuniting 108 dogs with their owners and rehoming 30 with recognised animal rehoming charities. Sadly 16 dogs needed to spend time in our vets due to their age or welfare concerns. We cared for a further 3 dogs while their owners have been in hospital.

Air Quality

Officers have commenced preparation of the partners 2020-21 Annual Status Reports for DEFRA that are due in June. It is anticipated that the reports should be completed on schedule but there will be a limitation to the reporting outcomes due to 2020 presenting abnormal emissions monitoring due to the lockdown. Progress reporting on air quality improvement actions will also be limited for these reasons, with reporting also completed around June.

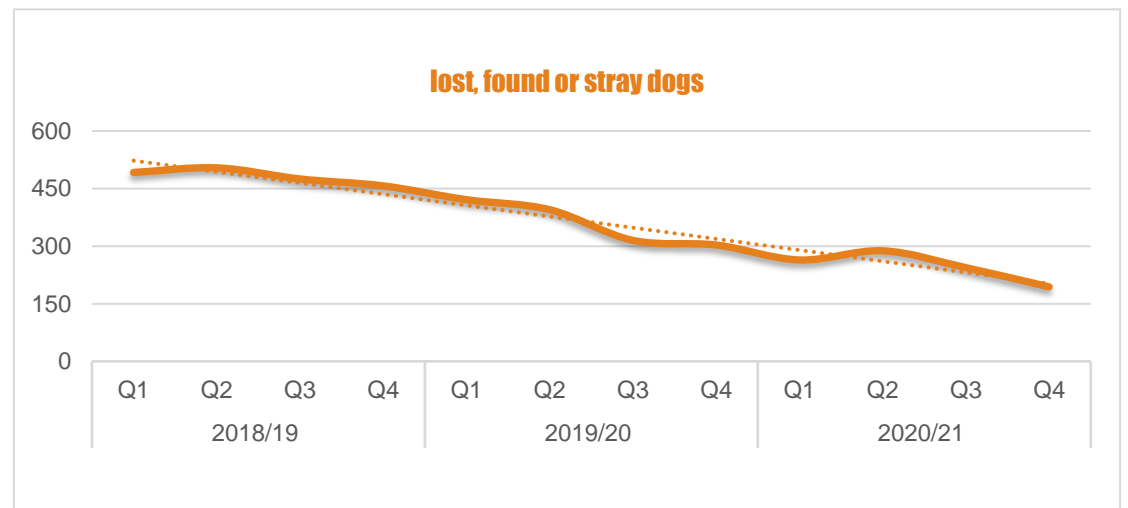
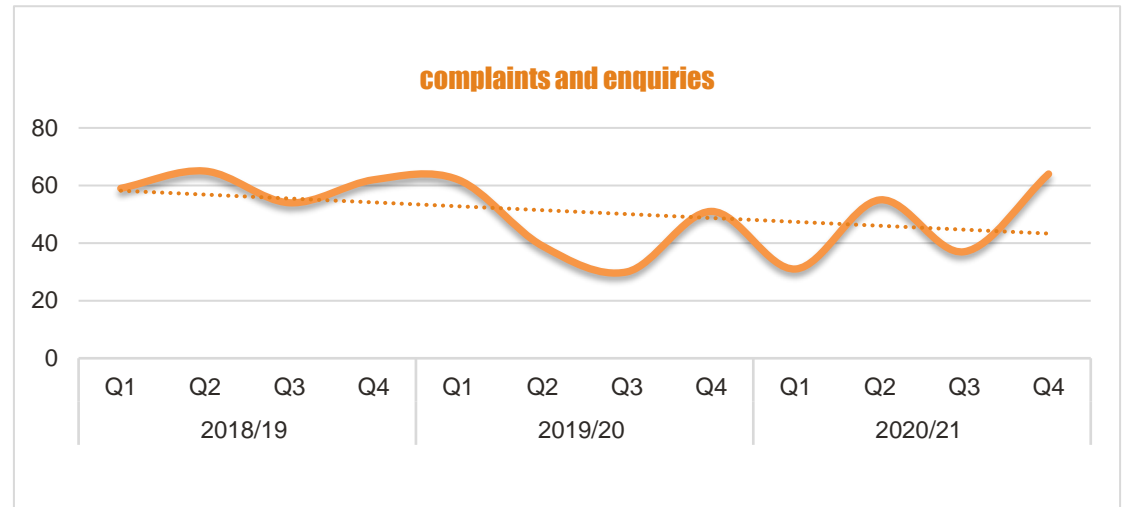
Contaminated Land

Officers are currently in discussions with the Environment Agency concerning the old Fire station in Windsor Street Bromsgrove. The site has historically been inadvertently contaminated with FOS/PFOA substances more commonly known as forever chemicals. WRS officers have proposed that the fire station becomes a 'special site' under the contaminated land regime and are seeking the views of the EA as to its subsequent determination.

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

The number of stray or lost dogs reported to WRS during the year has continued to decline, with the total number of cases a reduction of 48% and 30% compared to previous years. The nature of cases has remained consistent however, with approximately 64% relating to 'contained' stray dogs. This means the dog was found and held by, for example, a member of the public. Approximately 74% of stray dogs were returned to their owners, whilst 17% were rehomed.

In general terms, WRS receives a low number of dog control complaints. Based on the 133 complaints received this year, 47% related to fouling and persistent straying, whilst 41% related to dangerous dogs.



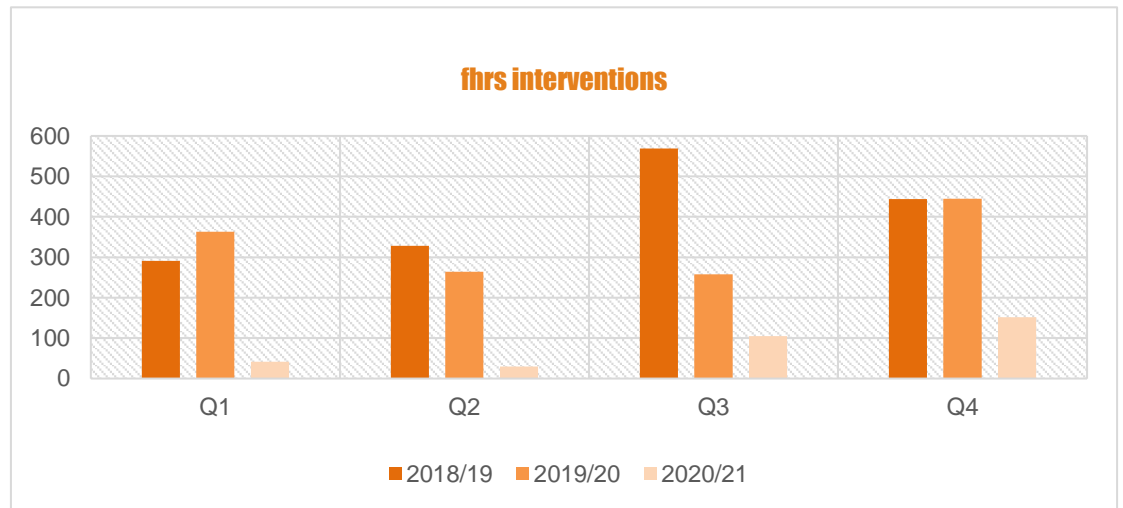
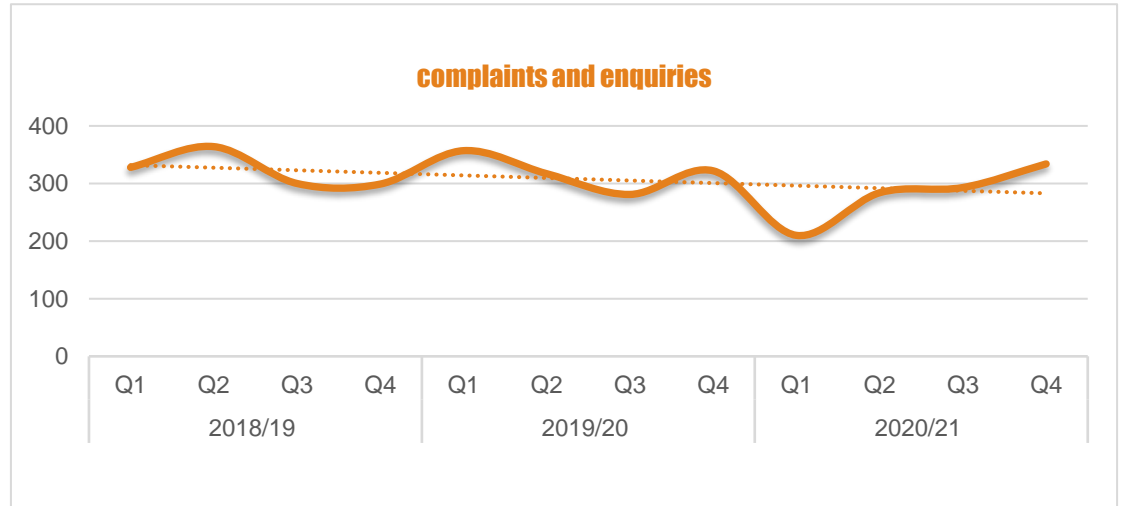
Officers have confirmed that the blended inspection regime has been a success, with compliance being secured across the majority of sites.

We are also pleased to confirm that none of the regulated business have suffered bankruptcy during the lockdown period, with many sectors going back to business as usual. It is anticipated that intelligence gathering around non-complaint businesses will resume at the end of the first quarter of 2021/22, along with site visits, should lockdown restrictions continue to ease.

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

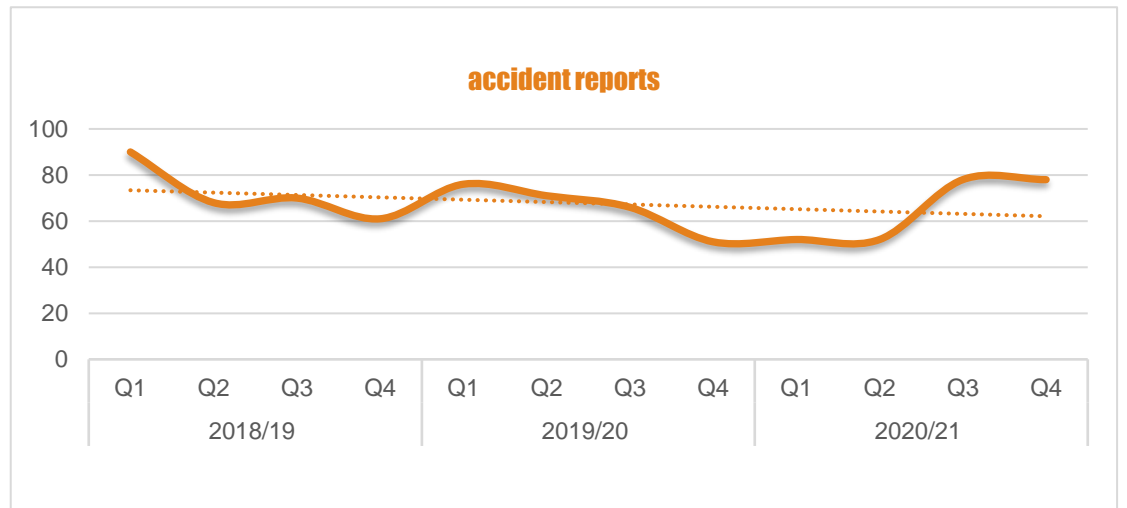
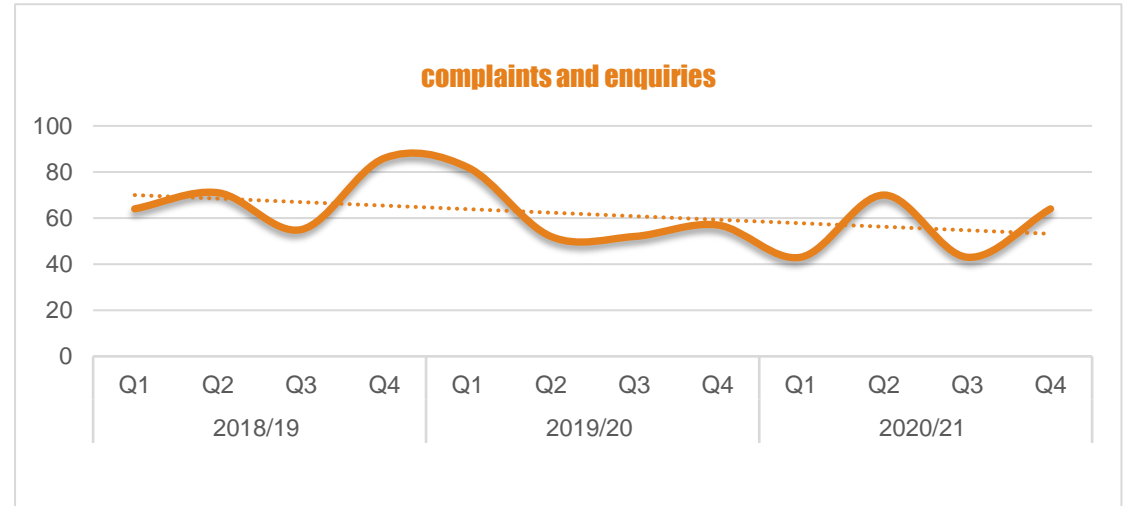
The number of food safety cases reported to WRS during the year is a reduction of 12% compared to previous years. This reduction however, particularly during quarter one, coincided with the closing of many hospitality premises due to restrictions implemented as a result of COVID-19. Based on the 492 complaints received, approximately 80% related to products purchased from food premises, whilst 20% related to hygiene standards and practices.

Total of 16 interventions conducted this year resulted in a non-compliant (0, 1 or 2) rating being issued. The majority of these ratings were issued to small food retailers or takeaways. Whilst a significantly lower number of interventions were undertaken this year due to COVID-19 restrictions, the majority of non-complaint ratings were issued during quarter four due to a targeted food safety project.



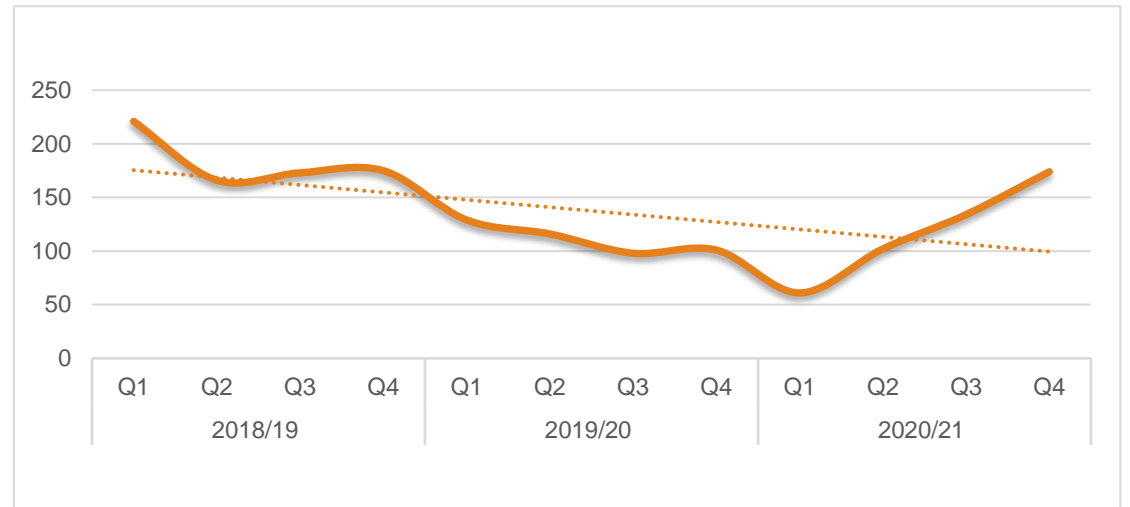
The chart (top right) shows the number of complaints and enquiries recorded by WRS over a three year period relating to health and safety at work. This includes requests for business advice. The chart (bottom right) shows the number of notifications received by WRS relating to accidents.

The number of health and safety cases reported to WRS during the year is a reduction of 5% and 15% compared to previous years. Approximately 54% of cases have been reports of accidents; with 36% relating to injuries where a worker is incapacitated for more than seven days. A further 36% related to viruses and diseases; specifically positive COVID-19 tests at premises such as residential care homes.



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

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



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

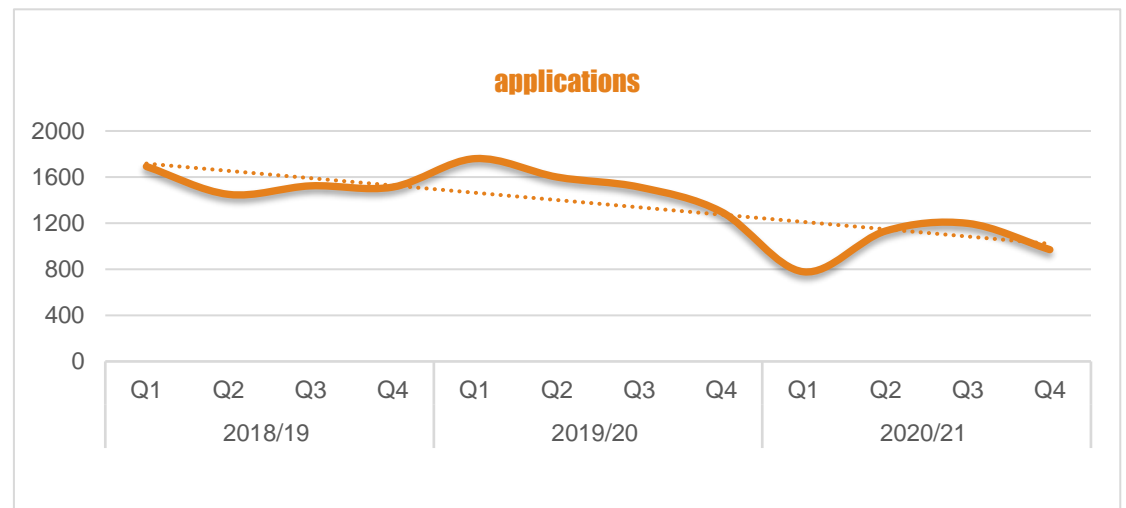
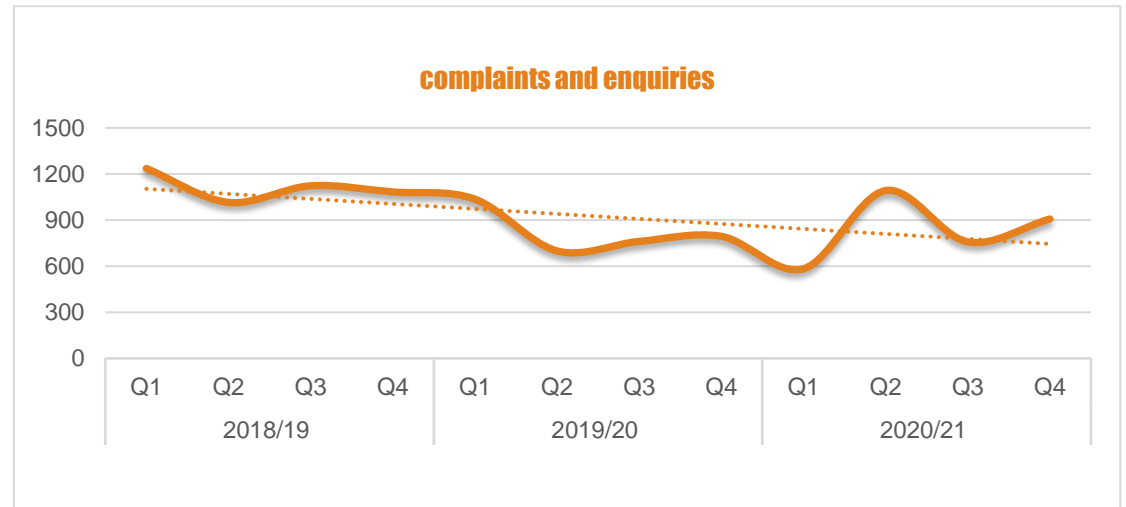
Licensing complaints, enquiries and applications relate to the following;

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

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The number of licensing cases reported to WRS during the year is a reduction of 21% and 40% compared to previous years. With the hospitality sector and night time economy significantly affected by COVID-19 restrictions however, this has led to a significant reduction in the volume of alcohol licensing applications; particularly temporary event notices. Approximately 54% of cases have been applications and registrations; with 38% relating to private hire and hackney carriage vehicles.

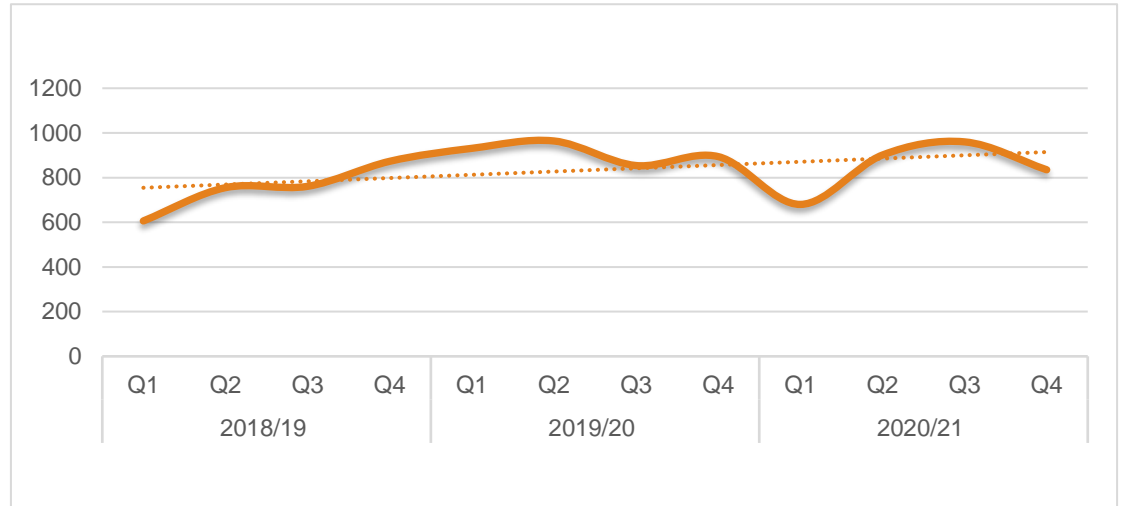
In general terms, WRS receives a higher number of enquiries about licensing matters than complaints about licensed or unlicensed activity. Based on the 498 complaints received this year, 38% have related to alcohol and entertainment, whilst 25% have related to taxis and 18% to animals.



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

Planning requests relate to the following;

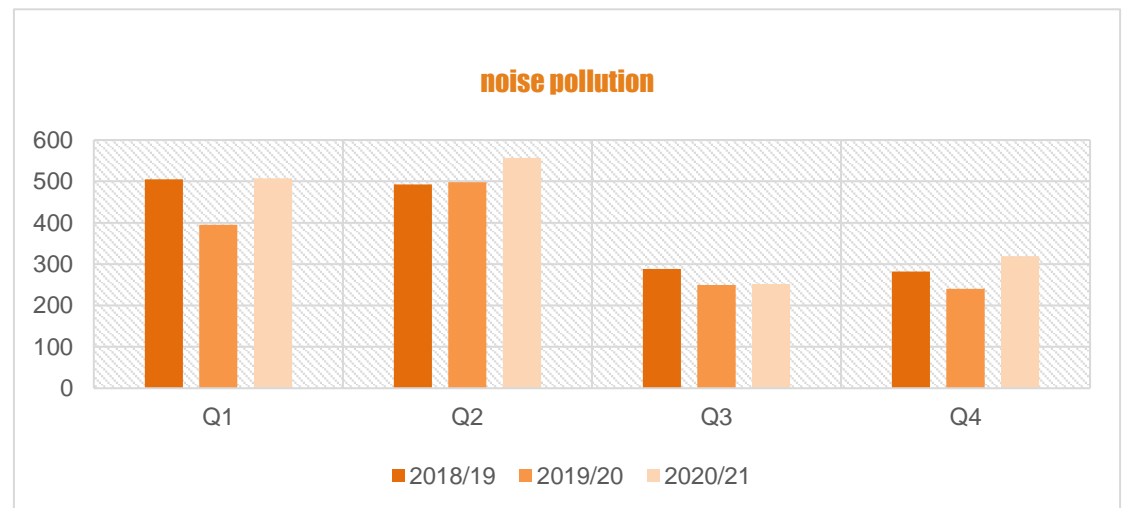
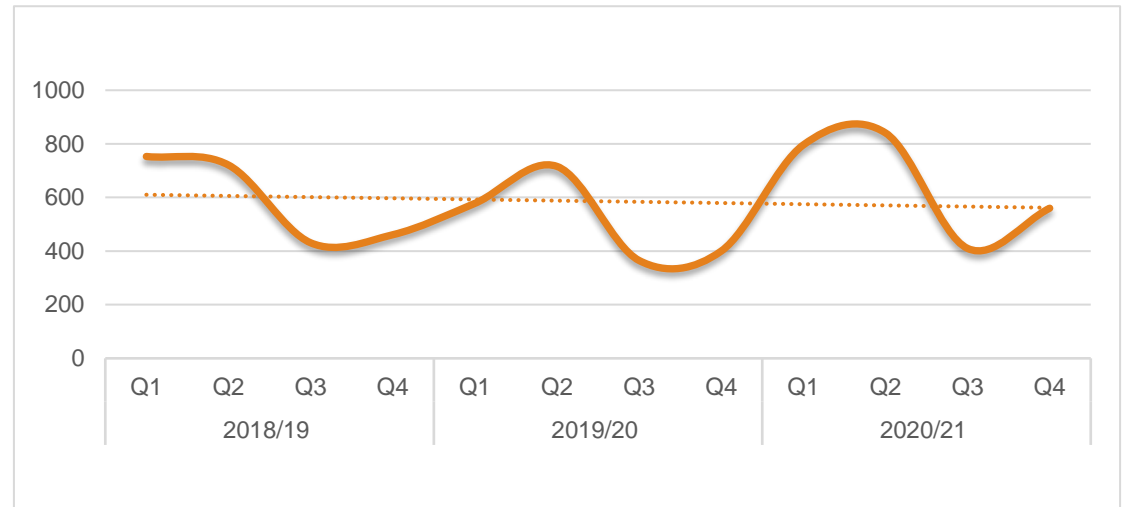
- Air Quality
- Contaminated Land
- Environmental Permitting
- Food
- Health and Safety
- Nuisance / Noise
- Private Water Supplies



The number of planning enquiries recorded by WRS during the year is an increase of 12% compared to 2018/19 but a reduction of 7% compared to 2019/20. Whilst there has been fluctuation in the number of enquiries, the type of cases has remained relatively consistent. Approximately 91% were consultations, whilst 52% related to contaminated land. A fifth of planning enquiries were completed, on a contractual basis, on behalf of other local authorities.

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

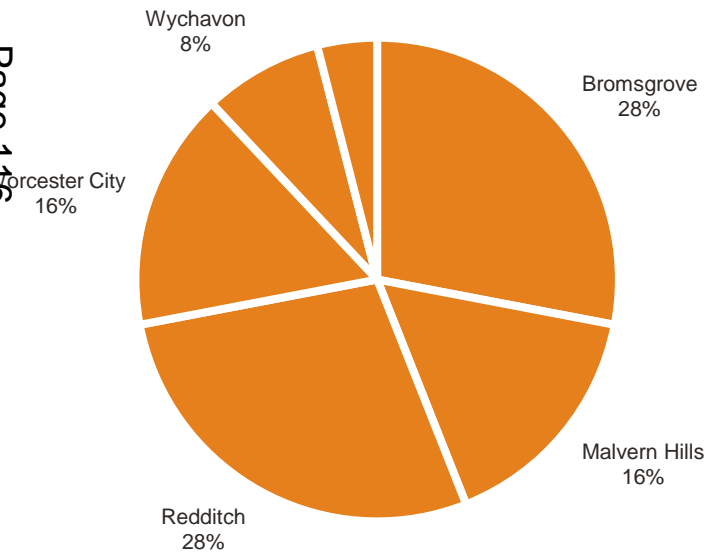
The number of pollution cases recorded by WRS this year is an increase of 23% and 10% compared to previous years. Approximately 43% of cases have related to domestic noise, whilst 21% have related to smoke nuisance. A significant proportion of the latter has related to domestic bonfires and the burning of commercial waste. Whilst COVID-19 restrictions are a notable factor in the level of incidents recorded, particularly for domestic nuisances, it should be noted that meteorological factors also have a significant impact.



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

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

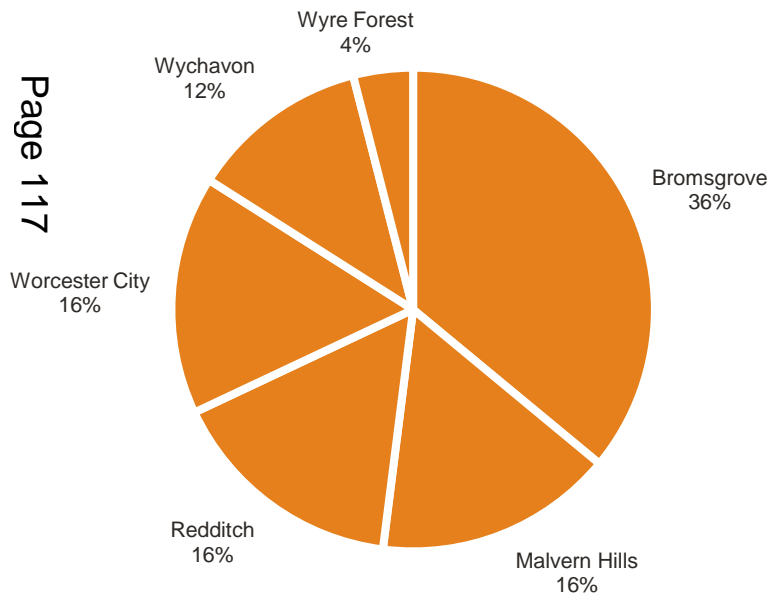
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Ward	Total	Population	Rate
Wribbenhall And Arley	34	5,444	6.25
Perryfields	8	1,501	5.33
Abbey	31	6,620	4.68
Norton	17	3,707	4.59
Avoncroft	15	3,300	4.55
Lowes Hill	13	2,903	4.48
Warndon	25	5,669	4.41
Sanders Park	16	3,651	4.38
Charford	15	3,665	4.09
Central (Redditch)	28	6,844	4.09
Rubery South	12	2,984	4.02
Saint John	34	8,836	3.85
Lodge Park	21	5,591	3.76
Bedwardine	29	8,167	3.55
Chase	22	6,217	3.54
Lindridge	8	2,261	3.54
Greenlands	32	9,329	3.43
Winyates	28	8,184	3.42
Church Hill	27	8,062	3.35
Hallow	6	1,840	3.26
Gorse Hill	19	5,839	3.25
Crabbs Cross	18	5,647	3.19
Evesham South	17	5,423	3.13
Pickersleigh	20	6,397	3.13
Droitwich Central	8	2,621	3.05

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

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

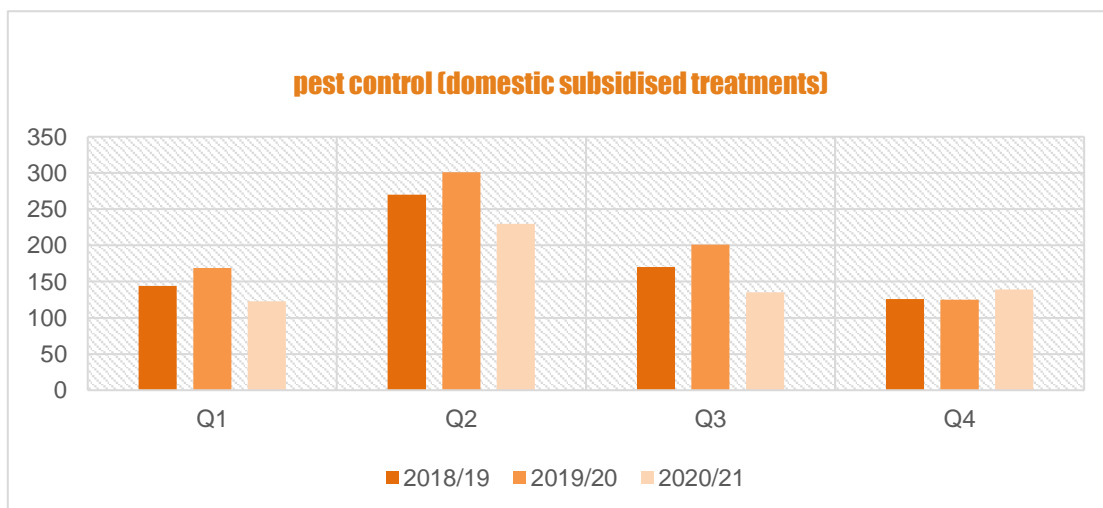
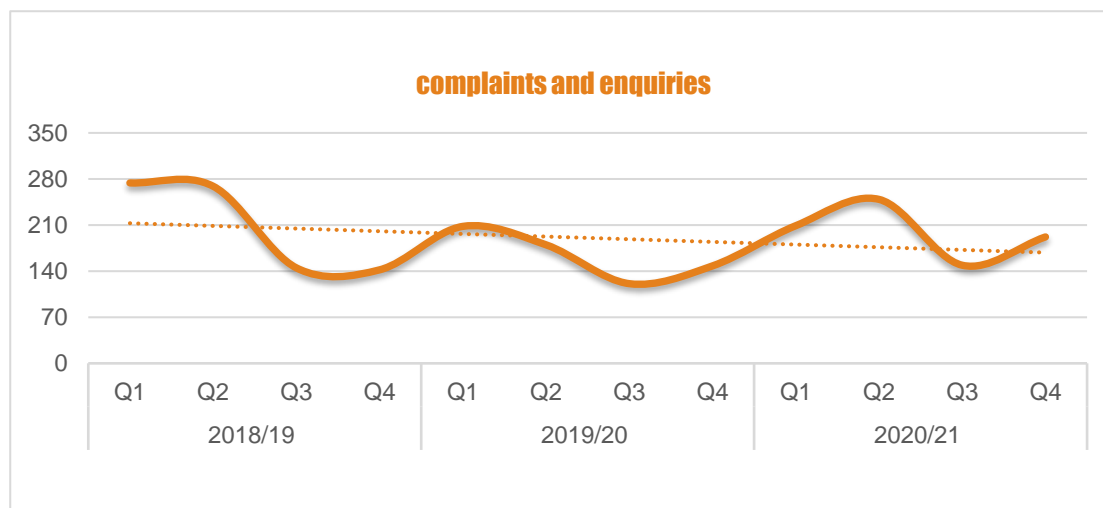


Ward	Total	Population	Rate
Droitwich Central	13	2,570	5.06
Cathedral	54	11,488	4.70
Upton And Hanley	18	4,153	4.33
Rainbow Hill	23	5,525	4.16
Lowes Hill	12	2,888	4.16
Charford	15	3,670	4.09
Charford	15	3,670	4.09
Catshill North	11	2,818	3.90
Offmore And Comberton	35	9,726	3.60
Barnt Green And Hopwood	10	2,866	3.49
Warndon	20	5,754	3.48
Batchley And Brockhill	30	8,727	3.44
West (Malvern)	14	4,112	3.40
Avoncroft	11	3,242	3.39
Lodge Park	19	5,608	3.39
Bredon	9	2,666	3.38
Rock Hill	10	2,969	3.37
Arboretum	21	6,301	3.33
Abbey	21	6,323	3.32
Winyates	26	8,257	3.15
Sanders Park	11	3,559	3.09
Sidemoor	12	4,021	2.98
Pickersleigh	19	6,446	2.95
Alfrick And Leigh	10	3,493	2.86
Pershore	22	7,716	2.85

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

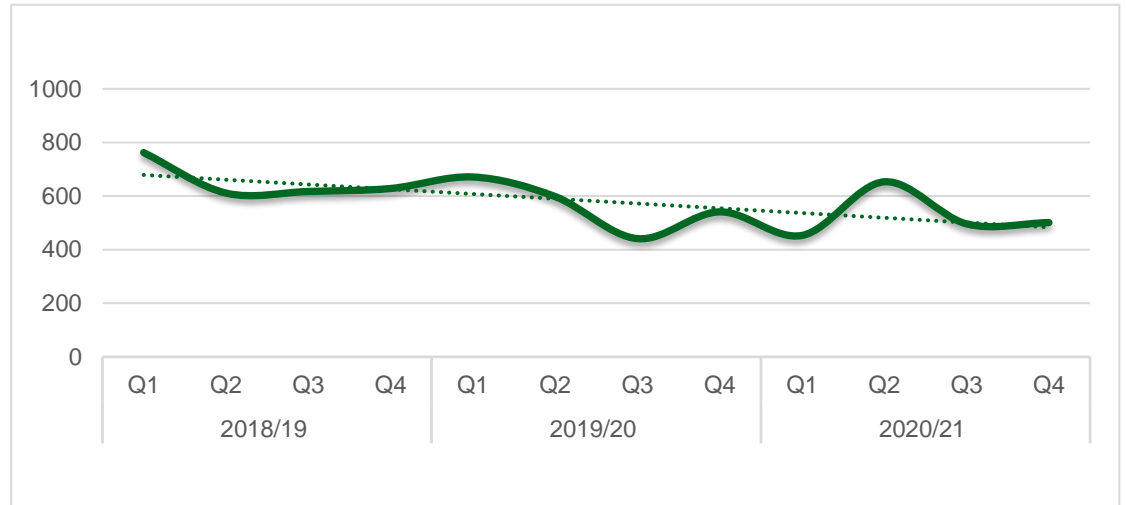
The number off pubic health cases recorded by WRS this year is a reduction of 3% compared to 2018/19, but an increase of 25% comapred to 2019/20. Approximately 65% of cases have related to pest control; whether enquiries about treatments or sewer baiting, or complaints about pest control issues caused by the activity of neighbouring residents or businesses.

Whilst there is a lower number of subsidised treatments, it should actually been seen as an increase; as only three districts are offering a service compared to four in previous years. Anecdotally, pest control companies have reported increases in rat complaints with reduced commercial opportunities for them to feed forcing them into gardens and contact with humans. Of the 139 domestic treatments undertaken during quarter three, 79% were due to the prescence of rats, 38% were in relation to properties located in the Redditch district, 36% were in relation to the Wychavon district and 26% were in relation to the Bromsrove district.

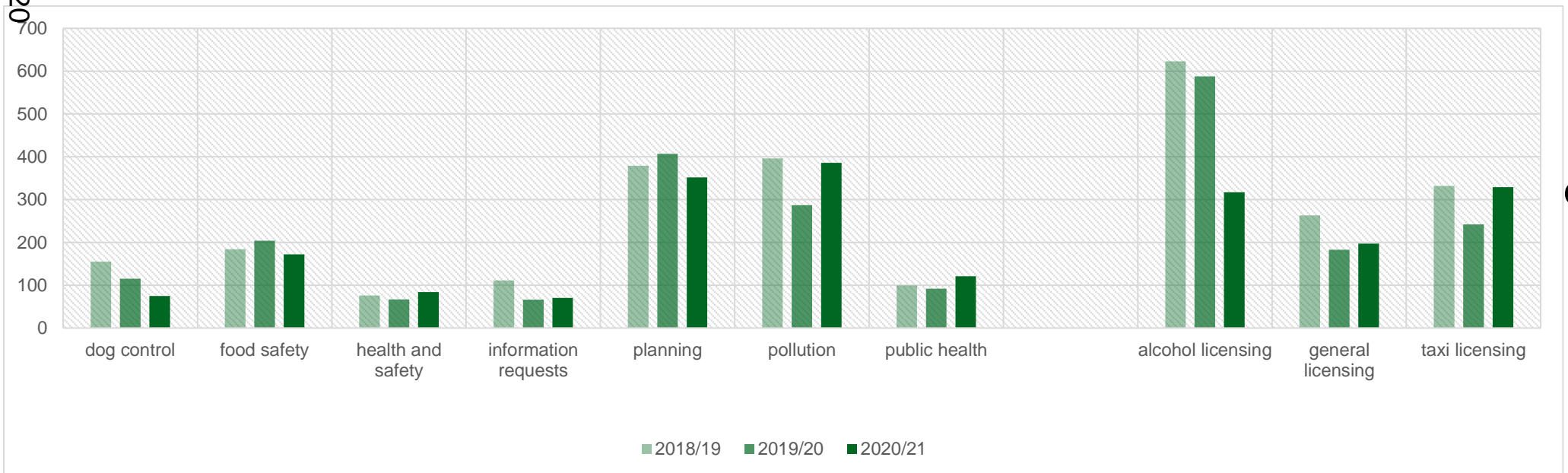


The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Bromsgrove district.

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

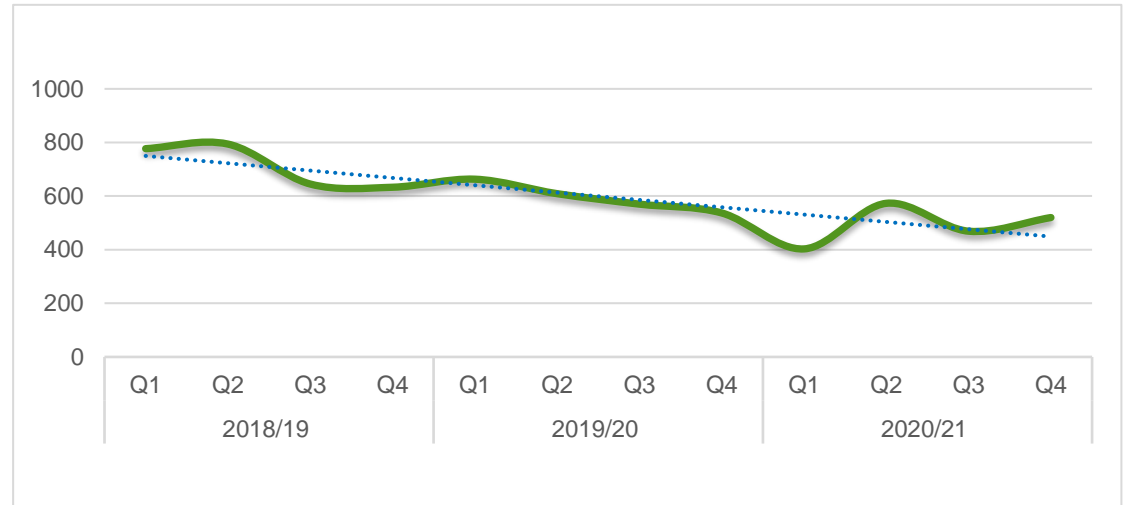


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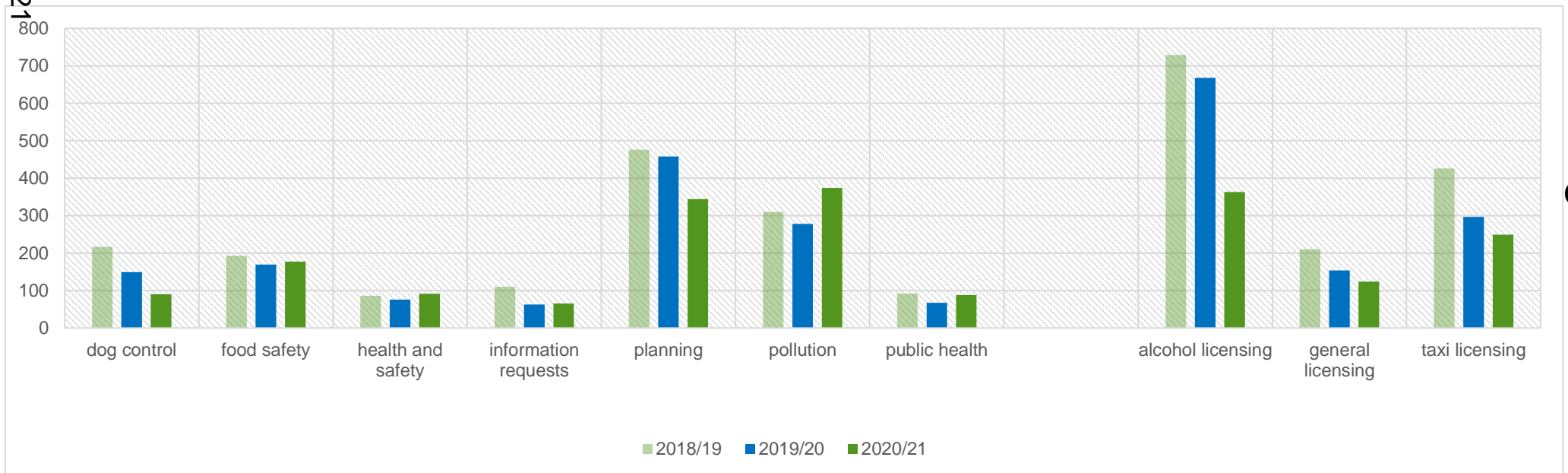


The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Malvern Hills district.

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



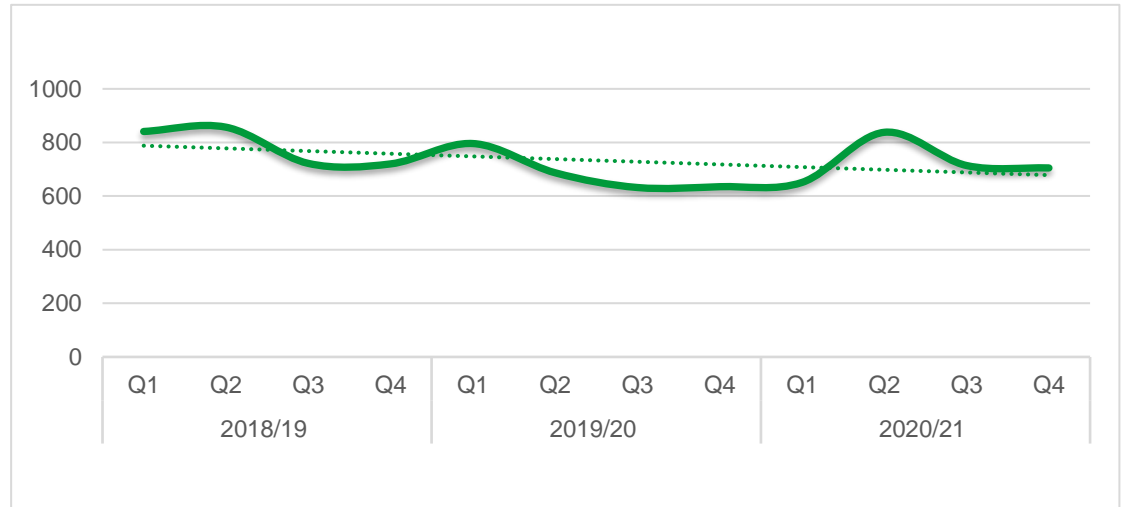
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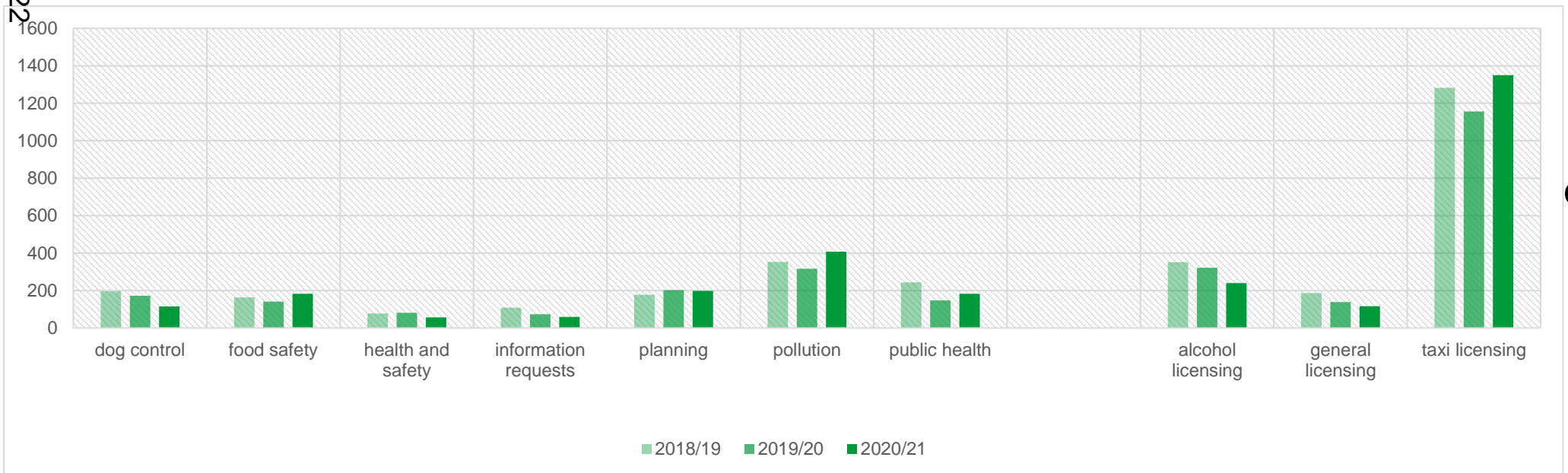
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The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Redditch district.

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

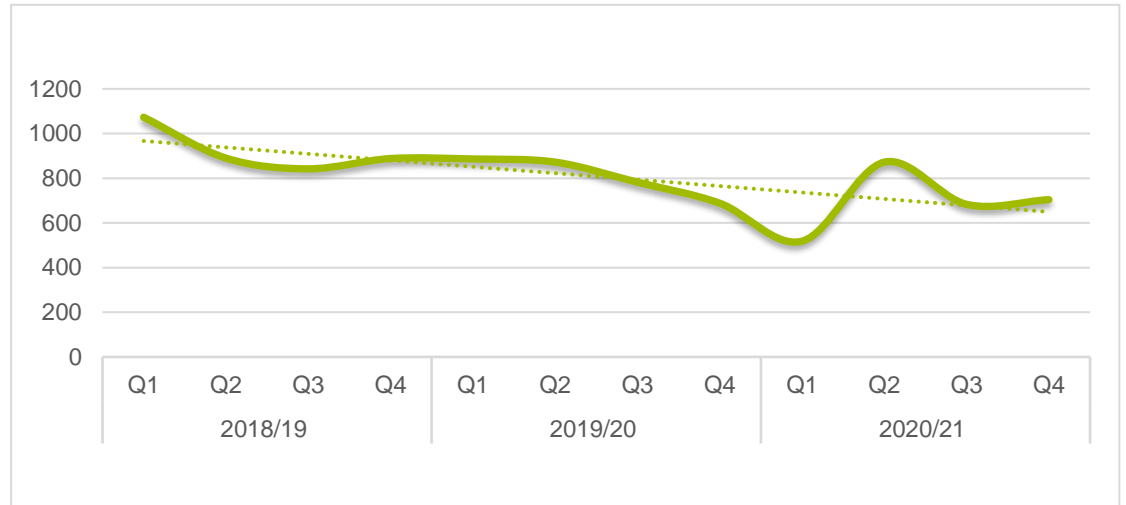


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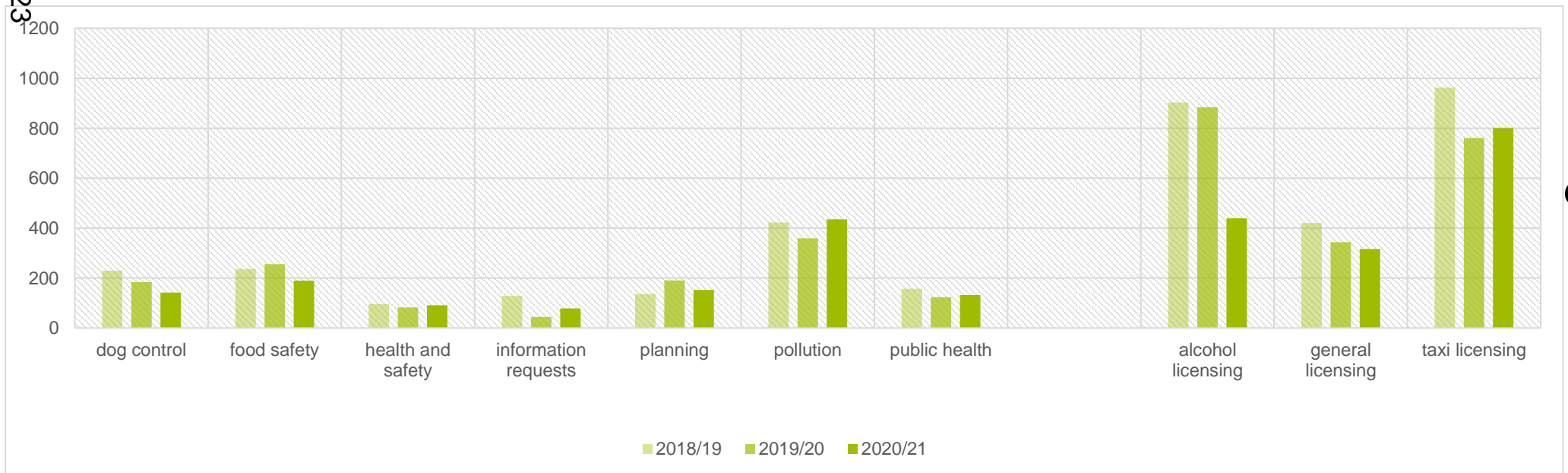


The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Worcester City district.

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

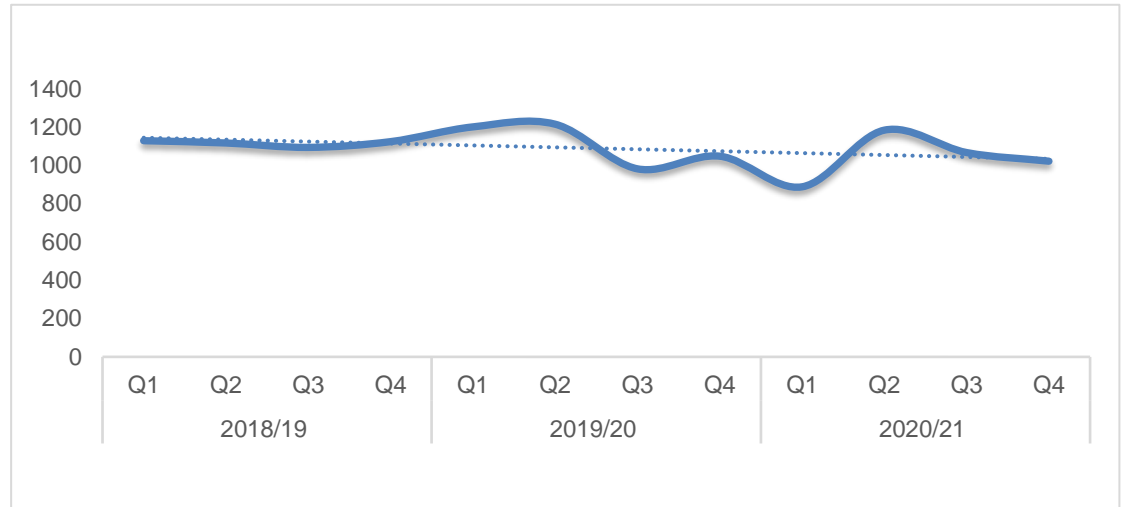


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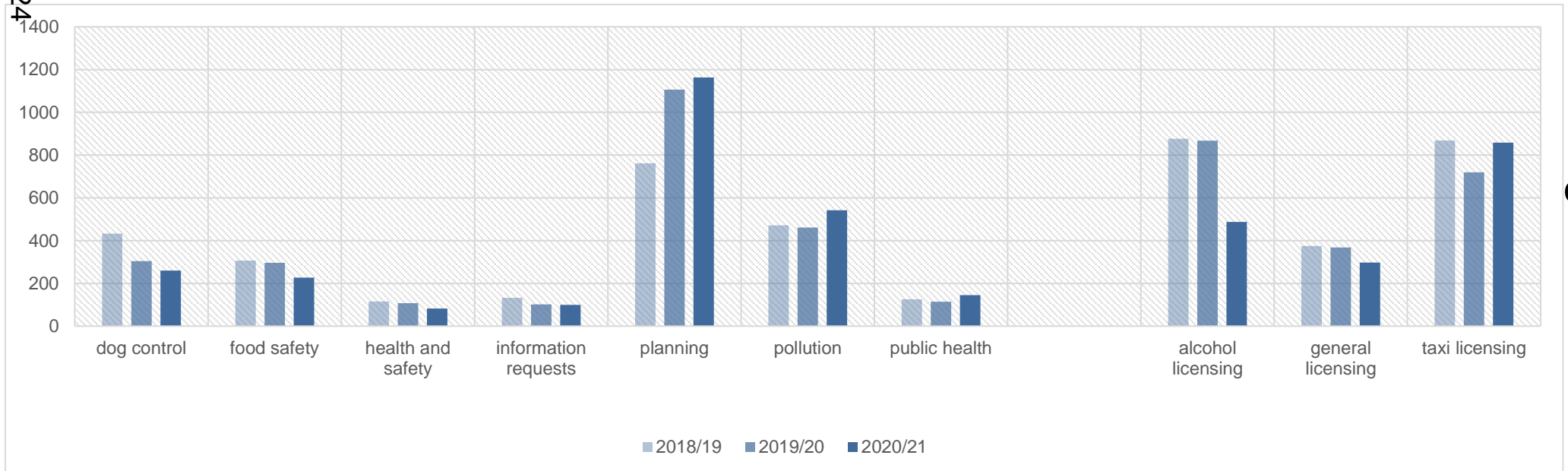


The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Wychavon district.

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

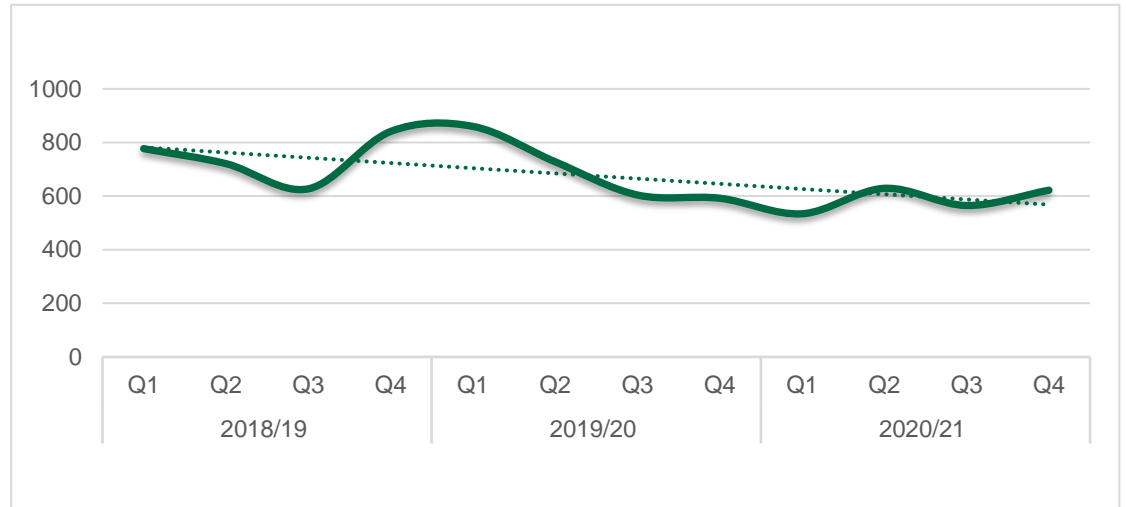


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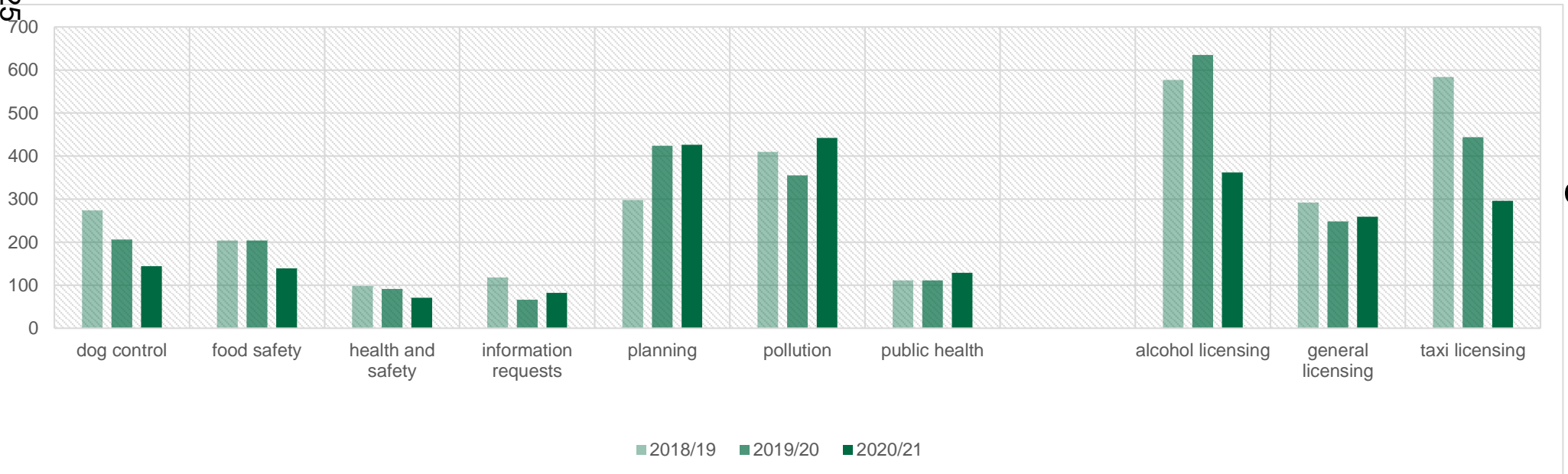


The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Wyre Forest district.

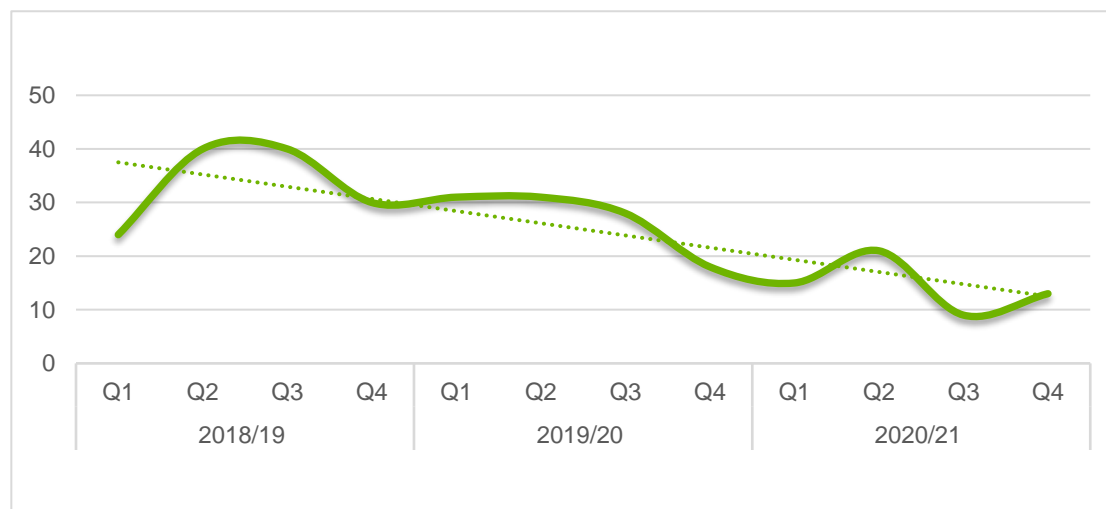
Note: The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS. The figure for the current year is a cumulative total based on each of the reporting periods. This figure will continue to increase until the end of year report is published.



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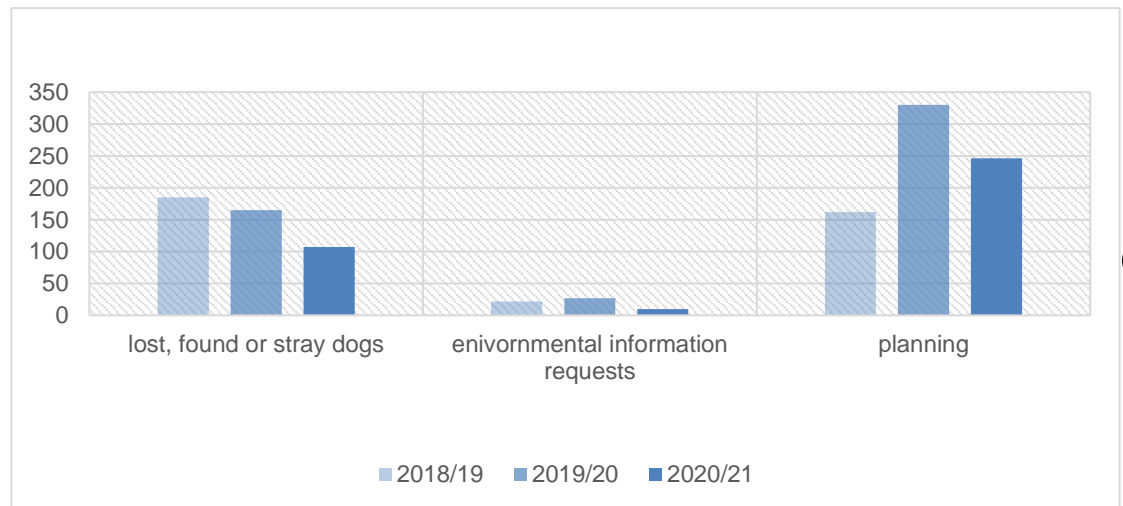
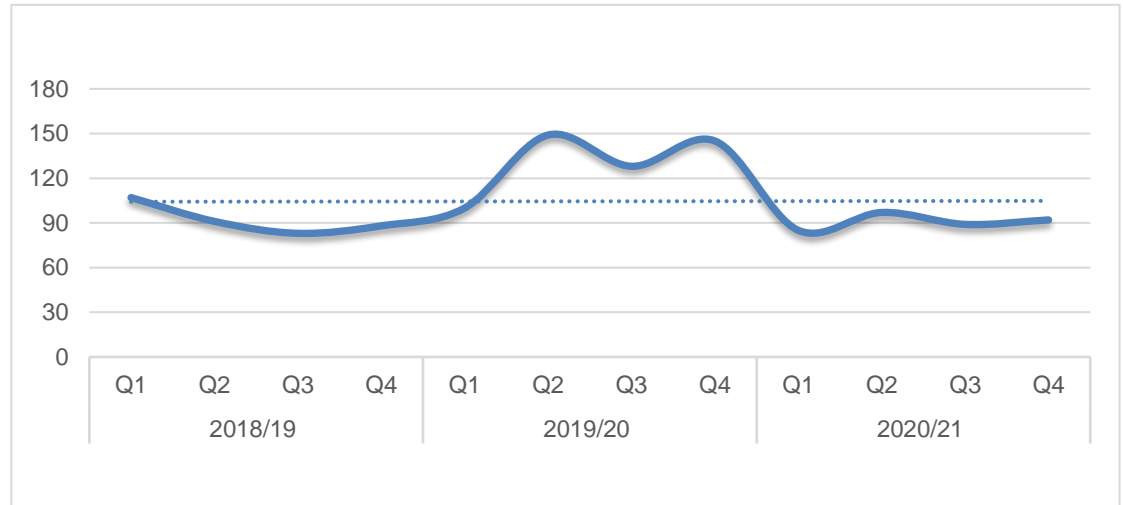


The dog control work WRS undertake for Cheltenham Borough Council is part of a three year contract with two other Gloucestershire authorities (from 2017) to deliver the collection, kennelling, returning of dogs to owners and rehoming of stray dog functions. The contract was renewed following delivery by WRS for the previous 3 years and has been highly successful in reducing stray dog numbers for Cheltenham Borough Council, 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 number of stray dogs during lockdown has fallen associated with less human mobility where dogs would be found by those out and about and a presumed reduction in latchkey dogs (allowed to roam rather than being walked) with more people taking their allotted exercise time walking their dog. There is concern that post lockdown their will be an increase in the numbers of abandoned stray dogs when people go back to work and dogs display attachment issues coupled with the inability of rehoming charities to allow prospective new owners access to view dogs available.

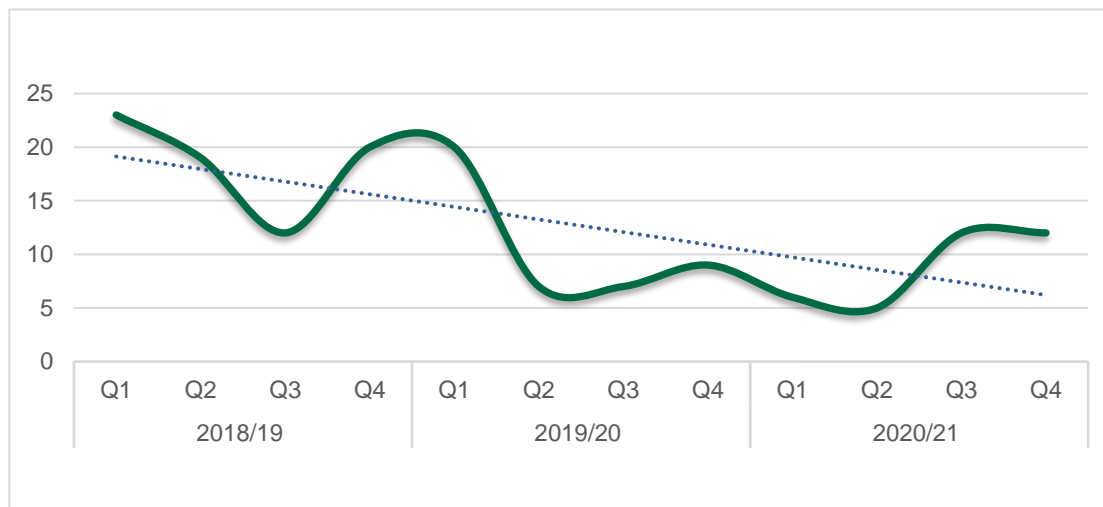


The dog control work WRS undertake for Gloucester City Council is part of a three year contract with two other Gloucestershire authorities (from 2017) to deliver the collection, kennelling, returning of dogs to owners and rehoming of stray dog functions. The contract was renewed following delivery by WRS for the previous 3 years and has been highly successful in reducing stray dog numbers for Gloucester City Council, 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. The number of stray dogs during lockdown has fallen associated with less human mobility where dogs would be found by those out and about and a presumed reduction in latchkey dogs (allowed to roam rather than being walked) with more people taking their allotted exercise time walking their dog. There is concern that post lockdown there will be an increase in the numbers of abandoned stray dogs when people go back to work and dogs display attachment issues coupled with the inability of rehoming charities to allow prospective new owners access to view dogs available.

There was a reduction in the level of planning activity this year due to the Covid-19 outbreak. In addition, WRS postponed PPC inspections due to the lockdown and some businesses mothballing their activities due to staff furlough.

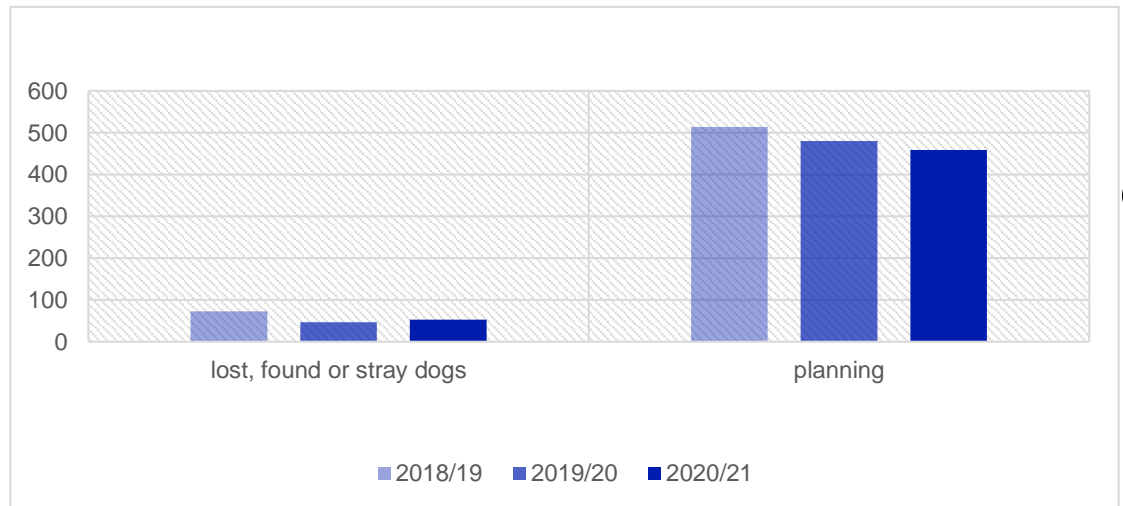
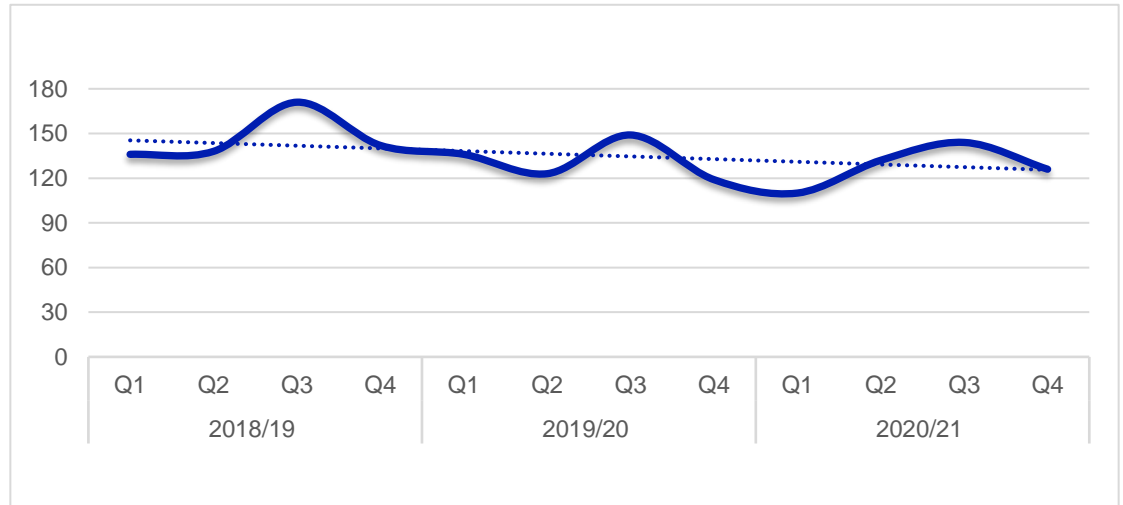


South Gloucestershire being located on the outskirts of Bristol was subject to significant contaminative industries and activities historically. Pressures on brownfield development recently have presented the authority with a large volume of planning applications on significantly contaminated and complex sites. For a number of years now WRS has been asked to assist with this work focusing on the complex sites, so whilst numbers of referrals remain low, when presented they tend to be time consuming and complex. Work demand is dependant on resource availability at South Gloucestershire Council and as a consequence WRS is retained to undertake repeat work for them when this becomes an issue. Not unlike other parts of the region planning work has been less due to the Covid-19 lockdown resulting in the postponement of planning application submissions.



The dog control work WRS undertake for Tewkesbury Borough Council is part of a three year contract with two other Gloucestershire authorities (from 2017) to deliver the collection, kennelling, returning of dogs to owners and rehoming of stray dog functions. The contract was renewed following delivery by WRS for the previous 3 years and has been highly successful in reducing stray dog numbers for Tewkesbury Borough Council, 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. There is concern that post lockdown there will be an increase in the numbers of abandoned stray dogs when people go back to work and dogs display attachment issues coupled with the inability of rehoming charities to allow prospective new owners access to view dogs available.

Planning work remained steady, with consultations for the last quarter being relatively comparative to previous years work.



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