

**JOINT COMMITTEE**  
**Activity Data Quarter 1 2014/15**

**Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2014**

**Recommendation**

**That members note the report**

**Contribution to  
Priorities**

The report covers both district and county functionality so covers the wide range of local authority corporate priorities to which regulatory services contribute

**Introduction & Report**

Joint Committee members have asked the service to provide data on activity levels to help reassure local members that WRS activity continues to tackle issues broadly across the county. The attached report follows the format of previous reports comparing demand coming into the service. Members will recall that, due to difficulties with data transfer, we were unable to show a full Q1 data extract last year. Hence we cannot do clear comparisons with last year but going forward this will be possible.

This quarter's activity data report does not contain all of the features of previous quarters' reports as the team is in the process of re-building the report format to include other information and clarify some areas. The revised format will be available for quarter 2 and show data for the preceding quarter so this will be included then.

The information shows that consumer complaints relating to Trading Standards functions remain at the same level as last year. The common top areas are, as ever, second hand cars, home improvements and furniture. This reflects the fact that these are all significant purchases so, if something goes wrong, there is a larger incentive to make a complaint. Industrial/ Commercial Goods and Services made an appearance in the top 15 areas this quarter. This classification pops in and out of the top related areas and refers to business to business transactions. Frequently this relates to poor quality goods or poor service. A useful reminder that businesses can be victims as well as consumers, albeit there is an assumption in law

that they are better equipped to deal with these problems.

For those Trading Standards complaints that can be allocated to a ward, there is a reasonable spread of the top 20 wards across Worcestershire.

From the perspective of district functions, Licensing and Environmental/ Nuisances continue to be by far the largest areas of work. The spread of Nuisance complaints across the districts is similar to previous reports, with 5 wards in Redditch featuring in the top ten. Having said this, for Q1, only Wyre Forest has no wards in the top 10, showing the spread of work across the County.

We had a reasonable spring, so we see the upswing of nuisance complaints from 672 during the previous quarter (Jan to March 2014,) to 1113 from April to the end of Jun. We also see the monthly totals climb from 129 in January, during the depths of Winter, to 513 during June with the early Summer weather. If trends follow the norm, the next quarter will show our usual Summer spike in demand.

Officers in the Environmental Health Commercial team are involved in an on-going investigation into a fatality in Redditch. The investigation is being conducted jointly with HSE and the Police. The company involved is based outside of Worcestershire.

May and June showed a spike in work for the Licensing team. This was caused by a combination of the taxi renewals in Wyre Forest (requiring drivers to make appointments to present documents,) and the introduction, through policy changes, of some additional training requirements in Redditch and Wychavon, which meant drivers had to contact the service to book onto training sessions.

Only a limited amount of case work came to fruition during the period, although a number of educational and informational press releases were put out. The case outlined below was taken by WRS Trading Standards staff and Sandwell MBC Trading Standards, with the case being heard at Wolverhampton Crown Court.

#### **Jail for plumber who defrauded vulnerable**

A plumber who defrauded elderly and vulnerable victims in Worcestershire, including leaving a couple feeling “mugged” after charging them £1,200 to fix a leaky radiator, has been jailed for 16 months after a regional investigation. Steven John Greenaway, 41, of Marlpool Lane, Kidderminster, pleaded guilty at Wolverhampton Crown Court to 13 fraud offences in Worcestershire and the West Bromwich area. He was sentenced by Judge Michael Challinor to 16 months in prison on May 1.

The Court heard details of offences relating to seven consumers, four from the West Bromwich area and three from Worcestershire. Greenaway overcharged for work, charged for work that wasn't necessary, and charged for work that was never carried out.

Prosecutors set out details of how consumers from Fernhill Heath,



St Johns and Malvern Hills fell victim to Greenaway. One elderly couple were charged £800 by Greenaway to fix a leaking stop tap, a repair that plumbing experts said a competent plumber should have been able to complete within 45 minutes at a fair cost in the region of £120.94.

A vulnerable mother and daughter claimed that Greenaway's behaviour left them feeling "threatened" after he charged them £1,000 to fix a dripping tap, a job that experts estimated should have cost between £230 and £290.

And in the third incident in Worcestershire, a couple said they felt like they had been "mugged" after Greenaway charged £1,200 for an emergency call out to a leaking radiator valve. Unnecessary work to drain the system and fit extra pipework was carried out, and anti-rust chemicals were charged for but never actually used – with Greenaway charging an extra £84 per half hour to collect the parts. Experts estimated it to be a two hour job for a competent plumber. The radiator valve was left leaking.

Officers from the EH Commercial team participated in Food Safety week in June, and the press release below highlights one of the key messages around tackling campylobacter infections:

### **Don't wash raw chicken!**

The message of this years Food Safety Week is "dont wash raw chicken" and Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) are working to spread the word to local consumers. The Food Standards Agency is spearheading a campaign to tackle the problem of food bug campylobacter, which is often spread through washing chicken and is the most common cause of food poisoning in the UK.

Cllr Lucy Hodgson, Chair of WRS Joint Committee, said: "Food safety inspectors check that food businesses prepare and cook chicken safely but consumers also need to be aware of the risks and the best way to avoid getting ill. You can't see campylobacter, smell it or even taste it on food, but if you get it you won't forget it. At its worst, it can kill. One of the main ways to get and spread campylobacter food poisoning is through touching raw chicken – in particular, washing raw chicken can spread campylobacter by splashing it onto work surfaces, clothing and cooking equipment. If everyone works together we can eliminate the risks."

The Environmental Health Team is urging all residents to get behind the campaign and stop washing chicken at home. Here are some top tips to make sure your food is safe to eat:

- Chill food properly
  - Make sure the fridge temperature is running below 5 °C.
  - Don't overfill your fridge. This allows air to circulate and maintains the set temperature.
  - Always store raw poultry at the bottom of the fridge and properly wrap or cover it to avoid raw juices contaminating other foods.
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Other press releases for the period can be seen on the WRS website by following the link below:

<http://www.worcsregservices.gov.uk/latest-news-press-releases.aspx>

**Financial Implications**

None

**Sustainability**

None

**Contact Points**

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**Background Papers**

Activity Data Report

