

JOINT COMMITTEE

25th June 2015

Activity & Performance Data Quarters 1, 2 3 and 4 2014/15

Recommendation

1. That members note the report

2. That members use relevant forums within their authorities to share this information with all elected members

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 continues to tackle issues broadly across the county.

Activity Data

The activity report attached as Appendix A comes in the new extended format put forward last year, providing members with wide ranging information across a number of parameters. It has now built into the full end of year activity report detailing all of the services main functional actions. It contains all of the cross-county comparators that members will be used to and also a section for each district covering each one's particular activities in more detail. The version attached to this report is an extract covering all of the key county-wide data. The full document, which members will be provided with electronically, has a section for each quarter so members can see all of the figures representing 12-months of WRS activity in their districts.

Each of the Team Managers has again provided a commentary on their areas of work to give members a flavour for what is happening and explaining some of the wider activity.

For the Technical Pollution Team, the annual reporting requirements for the District Councils continued to be undertaken in the production and submission to DEFRA of progress reports under the Local Air Quality Management Regime. These are important to complete with EU infraction proceedings continuing. In support of the UK Government's response, WRS on behalf of the District Councils provided DEFRA with a substantial amount of information this quarter demonstrating the work that is being undertaken to provide betterment in air quality. This information will form part of the Air Quality Action Plan Progress Reports for each District which are being completed currently. These reports provide updates on the actions being taken and form part of the reporting requirements to DEFRA. The amount of progress and large number of Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) covered by the WRS report caused some issues but it will be completed in due course.

The Smallwood Cadmium Survey drew to a close. Initially a large project covering over 300 properties in Redditch where it was uncertain whether contamination levels represented a risk to normal use of their rear gardens. Through systematic sampling and risk assessment, the number of properties considered to have contamination at levels of concern has been clarified at four. WRS are now in the process of communicating with those residents on the options available to them. Interestingly, the investigation has concluded that the contamination identified is likely to have been the result of resident activity rather than the battery factory initially investigated.

Planning obligations continue to be the main source of resolution for potential land contamination issues and the expertise that WRS holds in this regard has been utilised heavily with Worcestershire Planning consultations but additionally in generating income through contracts with Gloucester City Council and South Gloucestershire Council for Contaminated Land advice.

The Community Environmental Health team's activity this quarter has been focussed on the investigation of food safety, health and safety and nuisance offences. There are currently 15 case investigations either in the court system or in the final stages of working up prosecution reports. The food inspection programme has been completed with levels of broad compliance appearing in the Annual Report performance indicators. Poor performers continue to be found in all food sectors in all Districts. Businesses which only achieve a rating of FHRS L0-2 are now not only subject to revisits until conditions improve, but also to further action ranging from a letter from the Food Safety lead officer, to review meetings or more serious action. In the case of FHRS Level 0 premises (the poorest) the presumption is now that we move quickly to formal action where these are found. Two prosecutions are pending (a restaurant and a retailer) and four simple (formal) cautions have been issued, mostly for rodent infestations and



dirty conditions.

Health and safety investigations can be complex and take months, and sometimes years, to bring to completion. On-going investigations include a dangerous occurrence involving a child in a major retailer to incidents at builder's merchants and warehouses. One case is currently with the CPS for a possible corporate manslaughter charge.

The contract to provide nuisance investigation work for Tewkesbury Borough Council has been extended into May 2015, providing an income which is being re-invested in the service. WRS has also secured funding from the Local Economic Partnership to look at a possible Earned Recognition scheme for small producers and manufacturers which will enable them to seek new markets.

For Licensing, this is the second report where we have been able to give you a breakdown of the areas of activity being covered by our staff. As you will see from the tables, the two largest areas by far relate to taxis and to the Licensing Act 2003 (alcohol and entertainment.) This applies to both applications (new, renewals and the numerous variations that can be requested,) and for service requests. There was a small reduction in the number of both applications and service requests during quarter 4 compared with quarter 3 however this is likely to be a small seasonal variation. Obviously as the volume of licensing data increases we will understand better how these variations look.

For the Trading Standards and Animal Health team data, the bar charts show a reduction in the number of complaints during quarter 4. This is attributable to a computer glitch where the WRS IT system stopped communicating with the Citizens Advice Consumer Services (CACS) database and the complaints were not loaded onto our database for around a month. This was not a barrier to the service continuing as WRS officers could log into the CACS directly in order to identify complaints that required action by this service, so we were still able to react where necessary.

The chart shows that the main causes for complaint are second-hand cars, home maintenance and furniture. Priority areas for investigation by the team are rogue traders preying on vulnerable people, unsafe consumer products that have caused/have the potential to cause injury and issues involving significant economic detriment. Activity is also tasked where a trader has a significant number of complaints recorded against him/her.

Cases which came to fruition during quarter 4 included a Kempsey-based company and its director were ordered to pay fines and costs totaling £11,408 after being found guilty of reducing mileages on cars for sale.

Lloyd Chandler and Priority Hire Ltd appeared at Worcester Crown Court on Monday February 16 after earlier pleading guilty to offences under the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008.

An investigation by WRS Trading Standards officers revealed the company had advertised two clocked cars for sale where mileages had been reduced. One had been sold to a customer before Trading Standards officers swooped.

In mitigation, the court heard that Mr Chandler had employed someone to deal with the purchasing and sale of the vehicles and it had been them who were responsible for the altered mileage. This employee had been dismissed and Mr Chandler had no knowledge of the offences. In evidence Mr Chandler's eBay account had been used to advertise the cars.

The presiding Judge stated that consumer protection offences were strict liability offences designed to ensure that no company or individual could be allowed to "scam" the public. He went on to say that Mr Chandler was the sole director and he had therefore allowed the criminal activity to take place.

Mr Chandler was also disqualified from being a director for five years.

All of the service's press releases can be found on the service's website by following this link or pasting it into your search engine:

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

Performance Indicators

The full set of Annual Performance Indicators is included in the Annual Report, so we have chosen not to duplicate them here. The Annual Report also provides a comparison with performance in previous years.

Financial Implications

None

Sustainability

None

Contact Points

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Background Papers

Appendix A: Activity Data Report

Appendix A: Activity Report
Attached as separate document