

## JOINT COMMITTEE

**Date: 8<sup>th</sup> October 2015**

**Activity Data Report Quarter 1 2015/16**

### **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**

It is now well established that the service provides activity data to Joint Committee members to help them provide reassurance to the wider membership that the service is functioning well. This report also highlights a number of our outcome based performance indicators that we are now seeking to report on a quarterly basis.

The activity data shows that consumer complaints relating to Trading Standards functions remain at the same level as the last quarter but were lower than Q1 in 2014/15, at a similar level to Q1 in 2013/14. Again we feel this reflects the low levels of promotion being undertaken by Citizens Advice Consumer Service of their 0345 number to the public. This has been raised with them via our national representatives on the governance group. However, with BIS being the contracting organisation, it is hard for local authorities to influence the behaviour of the operator.

The two top areas are, as ever, second hand cars and home improvements however, for this quarter clothing has exceeded furniture as the third most complained about product. This is somewhat surprising and the first change of this nature for some time. It has resulted from 2 businesses, one of which is an on-line clothing retailer that has

generated issues through poor customer service. The other is a clothing recycling business which does door-to-door collections that has been subject of referrals from other Trading Standards authorities. This kind of change in complaints patterns has been seen on other occasions and invariably relates to issues with specific businesses yielding a spike in complaints.

Industrial/ Commercial Goods and Services remains in the top 10 this quarter, suggesting to business to business transactions are still a feature and that businesses are seeking advice on resolution. A further 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. Gardening products and services also make their seasonal visit into the top 10 complained about issues, as one would expect with the spring and early summer

From the perspective of district functions, Licensing and Environmental/ Nuisances continue to be by far the largest areas of work. The spread of noise complaints across the districts saw all 6 partners having wards featuring in the top 20 for noise complaints during the first quarter, with Redditch, Wyre Forest and Worcester City having 5 each, and the other 5 being shared amongst the other three districts.

Spring saw a slight upswing in service requests for the Community Environmental Health team compared with the previous quarter but all areas of work except food safety service requests were down compared with Q1 in the previous year. Looking at individual areas of nuisance, domestic accumulations seem to have fallen whilst numbers of domestic noise issues have remained similar to their level for the same period in 2014/15. Issues with noise from commercial premises seem to be up slightly, possibly because of a relatively good spring encouraging people to leave their windows open more often so they are more likely to pick up on noise issues. If trends follow the norm, the next quarter will show our usual Summer spike in nuisance related demand.



On Health and Safety at Work, accident reports were down both on the previous quarter and on the same quarter in 2014/15. There were significantly fewer major accidents and no fatalities in Q1 this year. Also within the EH Commercial team, over 300 Food Hygiene inspections were completed, which is 24% of the programme for the year, so well on target and ahead of previous years. The reduction in infectious disease notifications relates to a change in our protocol where some issues that were merely logged but not actioned (effectively simply duplicating what Public Health England recorded) has ceased.

The bar charts dealing with planning requests for support and discharge of conditions both show an upward trend in demand. This is linked to the increasing levels of development in various parts of the County, of which members will be aware.

Overall the numbers of applications for licenses are very similar to the numbers in quarter 1 of the previous year. Service requests have only been reportable for 3 quarters now so we have yet to establish patterns. Numbers for Q1 were lower than those seen in Q4 last year and we expect to see numbers rise into the summer in Q2 with the volume of temporary event notices under the Licensing Act 2003 going up to accommodate summer business in licensed premises. The licensing team also commenced the public consultation processes for the various Gambling Act 2005 policies that the partners have and also for the street trading policy in Wychavon.

In relation to the performance indicators, the first quarter's satisfaction figures for both customers and businesses are up at 83% and 98% for businesses. This compares favourably with last year's out-turn figures of 77.4% and 97% respectively. The percentage of non-business customers who feel better equipped to deal with their own problems in the future is 80% for Q1 compared with last year's out-turn figure of 74%.

Press coverage for the service in Q1 was good again, with some of the highlights being:



### **Fishy scam as door-to-door sellers flog unknown species**

Worcestershire Regulatory Services Trading Standards team is urging members of the public to not buy from cold-callers, after receiving complaints about the doorstep sale of bulk fish at discounted prices. Scammers have been selling unknown species of fish in a door-to-door con in Worcestershire, putting people's health at risk. The offenders have been using high-pressure sales tactics to flog the fish, which is unlabelled and of an unknown quality, and some victims have paid out hundreds of pounds.

Councillor Bronwen Behan, Worcestershire Regulatory Services Joint Committee vice chairman, said:

"Our advice is to turn away cold callers you don't know who are trying to sell you fish like this. Unlabelled fish from an unknown source could make you very ill, as there's no way to know if it has been stored hygienically. It could be out of date, or of any species, and what's more you can't track the scammers or their product afterwards. Even cheque payments may go to someone completely unrelated. Protect yourself by only buying from sources you can trust."

One householder tricked by the scam was told the fish they were buying was filleted, but it was later found to be full of bones and of an unknown species – meaning it could potentially be anything.

Peter Holmes, WRS Senior Trading Standards Officer, added,

"Anyone who is approached by door-to-door fish salesmen should take details of vehicle makes or registration numbers and get in touch via Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555111 or the Citizens Advice Consumer Service on 03454 040506."

### **Music fine gives Landlord a headache**

THE leaseholder of a former private members club in Redditch has to pay £1,260 after playing late-night loud music at a 50th birthday party. Graham Allcott appeared at Redditch Magistrates Court on April 30 where he pleaded guilty to failing to comply to a Noise Abatement Order in July 2014 when loud music was played after 11pm.

The original order was served on him the month before following increasing noise from customers on the upgraded patio area to the front of the club and loud music from the function room at the rear of the premises.

The 44-year-old, of Walkwood Crescent in Hunt End, is a leaseholder of the Easemore Social Club in Easemore Road, which, until he



recently gained a premises licence, he was running as a private members club.

The prosecution as made by Worcestershire Regulatory Services Environmental Health officers using evidence obtained by noise monitoring equipment. Mr Allcott was fined £600, ordered to pay £600 costs and a victim surcharge of £60

**Financial Implications**

None

**Sustainability**

None

**Contact Points**

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**Background Papers**

Activity Data Report

