

WRS Joint Board: 6th October 2016

Title: Activity and Performance Data Quarter 1

Recommendation

That the Joint 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

This report covers the first quarter of 2016/17 and members will note that, due to the departure of the Trading Standards team on 1st June back to direct control by the County Council, we have not included the usual tables outlining Trading Standards and Animal Health activity. For member's interest, we have included one of our final news releases as the Trading Standards delivery organisation.

Contribution to Priorities

The detail of the report focuses on Q1 but the presentation of the data allows comparison with previous quarters and previous years.

Previously, 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. This has been continued since the move to Joint Board on 1st April 2016.

Report

Activity Data

As usual, licensing and environmental health nuisances continue to provide greatest demand, which is understandable given their direct impact on the public.

The Team Manager has provided a detailed outline of work done by the Community Environmental Health teams. Whilst the number of service requests in respect of food safety and hygiene are broadly in line with previous years, food inspections are slightly down on the same quarter last year but up on the year prior to that. This reflects the resources involved in conducting the complex enforcement activities being carried out, with two premises having been formally closed during the period and several prosecutions pending. We shall continue to monitor closely progress against the full inspection programme for the year so as to ensure that it remains on track.

The service now boasts several Primary Authority agreements whereby a

business enters into a contractual agreement with us on a cost-recovery basis to receive assured advice and several new businesses have signed up to the Healthy Eating award.

On Health and Safety, the number of complaints and enquiries for the first quarter has shown a downward trend on previous years whilst the number of accident reports remains broadly the same. Officers remain involved in a number of complex investigations including fatalities, the majority of these being concluded from the previous year.

Nuisance complaints have followed a very similar track to 2015/16 so far and the noise figures are comparable. However, it should be noted that there has been a rather dramatic change in the wards included in our top 20 for noise complaints however, we are confident that this is an artefact. Wyre Forest District Council have changed their ward structure and reduced the number. This has concentrated complaints into fewer wards, hence Wyre Forest DC appearing to have 40% of the top 20 wards when, previously, these tended to be shared across Redditch, Worcester City and Wyre Forest. For reassurance, members may wish to refer to the Rate column which shows the rate of complaint per 100 residents in the population of the ward. These still remain relatively low. We are awaiting official confirmation of the new Wyre Forest ward populations in order to present these.

As members will see, the number of planning consultations follows the same trajectory as Q1 in 2016/17, so this work continues to make large demands in terms of numbers and complexity on the team.

The new graphical representation of numbers of stray dogs dealt with clearly shows the fall in numbers since 2014/15. This has been an ongoing trend, which we explained last time, due to the wardens having tackled the habitual straying dogs and packs of roaming dogs by seizing the dogs and owners repaying the charges or having their dogs rehomed, along with the increasing use of social media by members of the public to tell the world that they have found or lost a stray dog. Whilst the latter does create some concerns for animal welfare and ownership, where little evidence may be required by the person claiming the animal, it is good to see people taking the initiative themselves and reducing the burden on local services at a time of financial difficulties for local government. Empowerment of this form, with the right safeguards, is clearly supportive of the smaller government/ self-reliance agenda.

Within Licensing, the recording of applications and renewals on our Uniform database is well established and we are now starting to see patterns of where demand highs and lows might be. Once this is clear it will allow us to schedule some of our proactive enforcement work better so that it imposes a lesser burden on officer time.

The apparent large drop in numbers of licensing service requests for the first quarter compared with Q1 2015/16 is an artefact, created by changes to how we record some of our information. Reviewing our systems revealed that some pieces of work that should have been recorded against on-going activity were being recorded as new work. Also, some work was being

recorded as an action against a license when it should have been recorded as a new service request. We have provided new and clearer advice to staff on what constitutes new work and what should be simply recorded against a license so that we can now get some consistency of how this data is recorded.

A new graph has been included this year to highlight the volumes of information requests that the service has to respond to on behalf of partners. These are statutory requirements under the Freedom of Information Act, the Data Protection Act and the largest by far, those under Environmental Information Regulations, which can link into things like land charges searches and the sales of property. We work closely with colleagues at the partner authorities to provide this information and we are constantly looking for ways to reduce the burden on us by publishing data on our website. Ensuring that our public registers are available on-line has been helpful in reducing the administrative burden of dealing with requests. For Environmental Information requests we have even updated our website so that people can apply on-line for the information, as is explained in the Press Release featured below. Also, when we look at Freedom of Information requests, many are from sources such as researchers and journalists, who will contact all partners. We look to provide Worcestershire-wide data in response to such requests to avoid doing it multiple times on behalf of each partner.

Performance

For the first quarter performance reporting is limited due to the nature of the indicators.

Customer satisfaction recorded 81.3%, which is slightly above but in line with last year's outrun and similar to the Q1 figure in 2015/16. For business satisfaction we are slightly down on the outrun at 92.9% but still good. Timeliness of responding is down and we will work to improve this.

The proportion of people who feel better equipped to deal with problems for themselves in future is slightly up on last year's outrun at 81.4% but still in line with previous performance.

Staff sickness is somewhat higher than in previous year's at 1.73 days per FTE for the first quarter. A large contributing factor to this is several members of staff with long term health conditions that have required surgery followed by periods of rest and recuperation.

Numbers of complaints are low, with only 3 in the first quarter and again they are significantly exceeded by compliments at 18.

Finally, a couple of press releases from the quarter will be of interest. All WRS press releases are available on the website. The second was one of our last whilst delivering Trading Standards functions; in this case explosives/ fireworks safety and licensing. It demonstrates the excellence of what was being delivered and the focus of our officers both locally and on the bigger national picture.

Items of interest

Environmental Information Requests go on-line

The Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR) provide members of the public with the right to access environmental information held by local authorities and other bodies. This information is used in many ways such as the purchase of houses (conveyance of), Property Development (Identifying land contamination and previous uses) and personal interest.

WRS have recently undertaken a number of enhancements to improve its website and enquiries can now be completed on-line instead of telephone, email or letter. The enquiry forms have been simplified for the purpose of house purchase/general information based requests in the main and there is also a separate technical enquiry form for environmental consultants for more complex searches.

Anyone can access this information through WRS, please [follow the link to make a request.](#)

Explosives conference is a real blast

More than 100 delegates attended an explosive national event to support Trading Standards and Fire Safety Officers, from across the country involved in the licensing of fireworks and explosives.

Organised by Worcestershire Regulatory Services Trading Standards Section and FELG, the Fireworks Enforcement Liaison Group, the inaugural National Fireworks Forum was held on 18th May at the Guildhall in Worcester.

Guest speakers included representatives from the Explosives Industry Group, the Chief Fire Officers Association and Just-FX, a Theatrical Pyrotechnician. Anett Polyak from TUV Rhineland, one of the leading European test houses, flew over from Hungary to speak on product compliance and testing.

WRS Petroleum and Explosives Officer Rachel Hallam said "This is the first forum of its kind and it was a huge success. To get this many nationally recognised businesses and regulators under one roof, pooling and sharing information is of massive benefit to all concerned."

"There have been incidents of huge explosions in the UK and around the world, where warehouses that store and sell fireworks have gone up in flames causing loss of life and huge devastation. It's vitally important that the industry and enforcement agencies work together for the safety of our communities"

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Background Papers

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

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1. Indicator	Reporting period	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4/ Outrun
1. % of service requests where resolution is achieved to customers satisfaction	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	81.3%			
2. % of service requests where resolution is achieved to business satisfaction	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	92.9%			
3. % businesses broadly compliant at first assessment/ inspection	Annually	NA	NA	NA	
4. % of food businesses scoring 0,1 or 2 at 1 st April each year	Annually	NA	NA	NA	
5. % of applicants for driver licenses rejected as not fit and proper Number of applicants refused, by district, and percentage those drivers represent of the total driver numbers in the County	6-monthly	NA		NA	
6. % of vehicles found to be defective whilst in service Number of vehicles found to be defective by district and the percentage this represents of the fleet county-wide	6-monthly	NA		NA	
7. % of service requests where customer indicates they feel better equipped to deal with issues themselves in future	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	81.4%			
8. Review of register of complaints/ compliments NB: See breakdown tables	Quarterly	3/18			
9. Annual staff sickness absence at public sector average or better	Quarterly	1.74 days per FTE			

10. % of staff who enjoy working for WRS	Annually	NA	NA	NA	
11. % of licensed businesses subject to allegations of not upholding the 4 licensing objectives	6-monthly	NA		NA	
12. Rate of noise complaint per 1000 head of population	6-monthly	NA		NA	
13. Total income expressed as a % of district base revenue budget (16/17)	6-monthly	NA		NA	
14. Cost of regulatory services per head of population (Calculation will offset income against revenue budget)	Annually	NA	NA	NA	