

Worcestershire
Regulatory Services

Supporting and protecting you

Activity Report | 2020-21



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Foreword

Welcome to the third activity data report for 2019/20.

The first quarter of the year has been dominated by Covid 19 work. Many of our businesses were closed during this period so, as you might expect, numbers were down in a number of areas but this was more than made up for by Covid related work and a significant proportion of staffing resource was committed to either disease control or ensuring the business closure provisions were being implemented.

Noise complaints were similar to Q1 last year, which was relatively high for this time of year, likely precipitated by good weather and the fact that many more people were at home during the day when otherwise they wouldn't be.

We hope you find the report interesting and if you've any questions please do contact myself or one of the Management team.

Many thanks

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S Wilkes". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S'.

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.

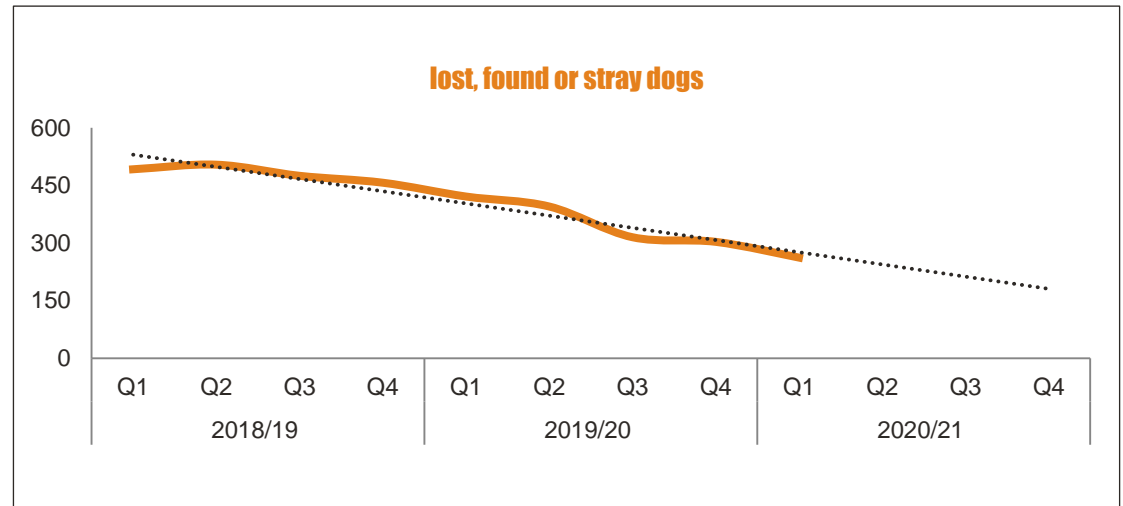
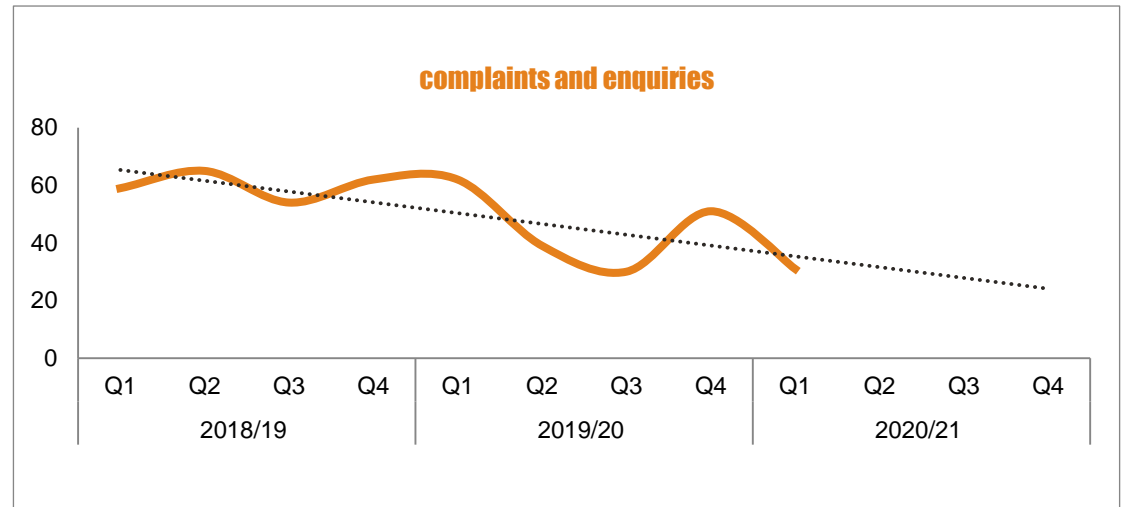
Due to the Covid 19 lockdown air monitoring work was suspended between March but resumed in June. Due to the unprecedented reduction of road vehicles it is anticipated that all of the air monitoring currently undertaken with diffusion tubes will not be usable for the purpose of providing annual average data for Worcestershire this year. Nevertheless reporting to DEFRA on air quality status continues. All annual Status Reports for each district have been submitted to DEFRA in June and are available on the WRS.

website <https://worcsregservices.gov.uk/pollution/air-quality/local-air-quality-progress-reports.aspx> .

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 continues to decline, with the total recorded during quarter one a reduction of between 37% and 46% compared to previous years. Despite this reduction, the type of cases remains consistent, with 67% of cases relating to 'contained' stray dogs. This means the dog was found and held by, for example, a member of the public. Approximately 70% of stray dogs were returned to their owners whilst 10% were rehomed.

In general, the service receives a higher number of enquiries than complaints. Based on the 22 complaints received during quarter one, 12 related to dangerous dogs and 10 related to fouling and persistent straying.

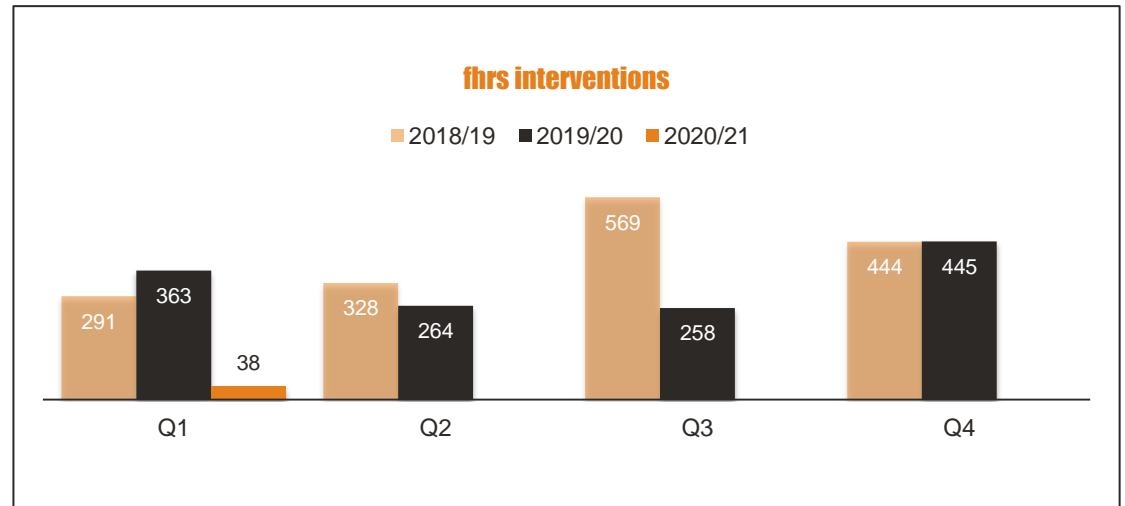
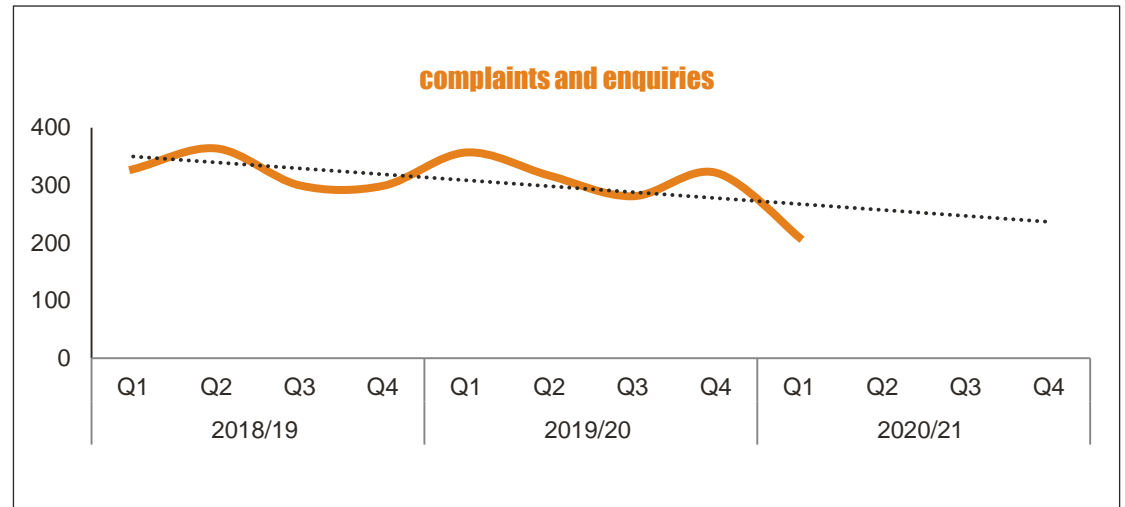


DEFRA published the 2020-21 subsistence fee structure in early May. We can confirm that the fee structure remains the same this year. The technical pollution team are currently investigating the feasibility of undertaking virtual compliance inspections as many companies are still working during the lockdown. This may change to physical inspections as the lockdown is eased, and it is anticipated this area of work will resume in late July or August.

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.

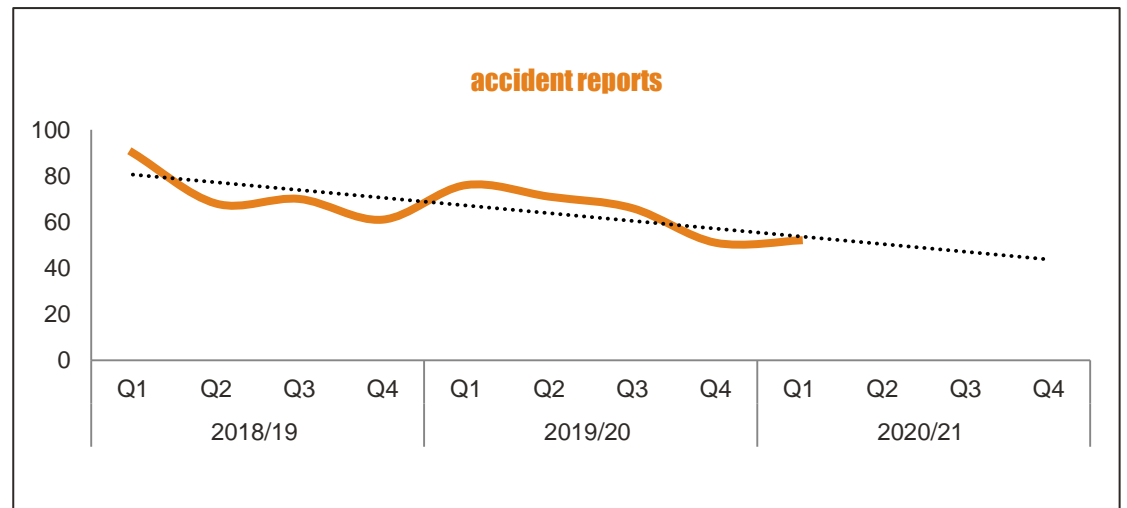
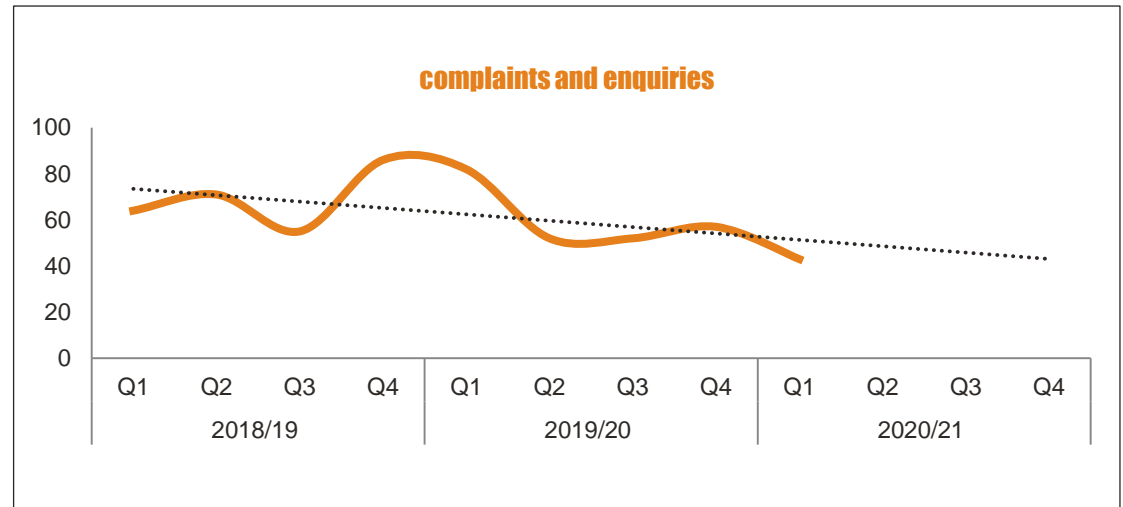
The reduction in the level of food safety cases coincides with a general reduction in commercial activity due to restrictions implemented in response to COVID-19. Where cases were recorded, over 50% were enquiries, whilst 29% were complaints about food products purchased from retail outlets.

Whilst proactive inspections have been suspended nationally due to COVID-19, the service has undertaken a number of food projects which our outlined in the team updates section of this report.



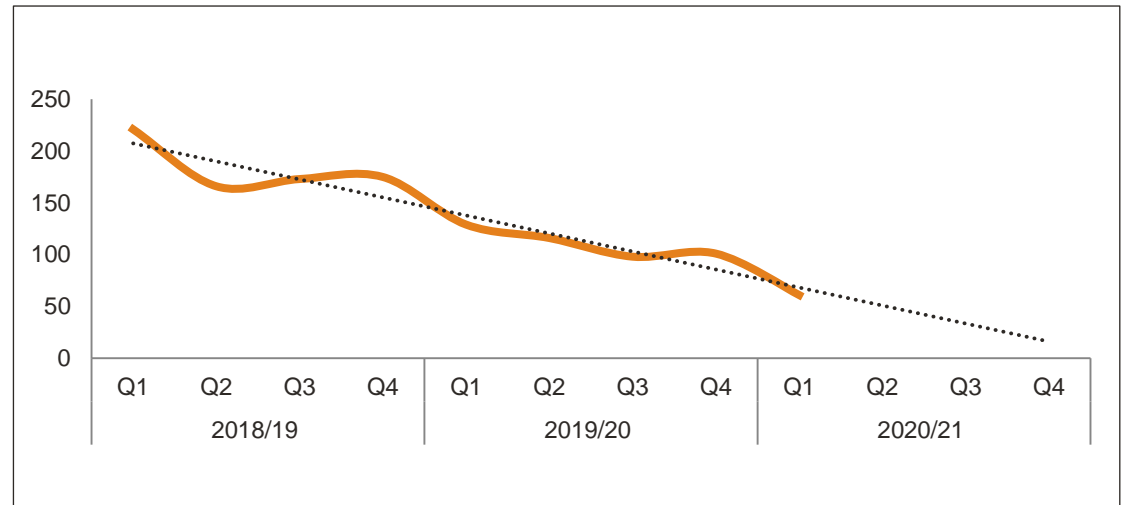
The chart (top right) shows the number of complaints and enquiries recorded by WRS over a three year period relating to health and safety at work. This includes requests for business advice. The chart (bottom right) shows the number of notifications received by WRS relating to accidents.

In parallel with food safety, the volume of cases relating to health and safety at work has also reduced during quarter one. This reduction however, has been partially offset by a number of notifications relating to positive COVID-19 tests in workplaces such as caring premises. Also in parallel with food safety, the service has undertaken several projects in response to the pandemic. Details of these projects are outlined in the team updates section of this report.



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



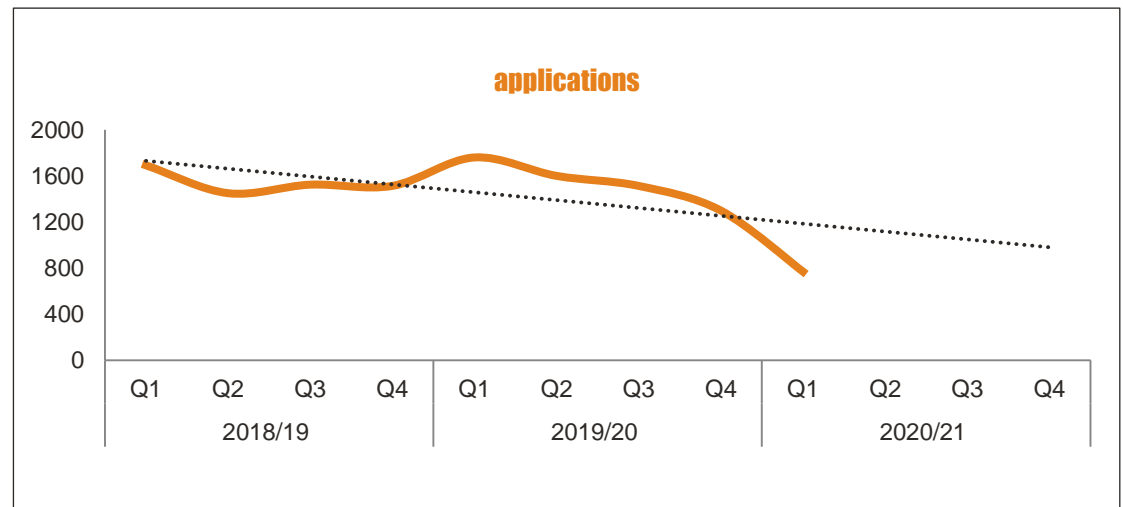
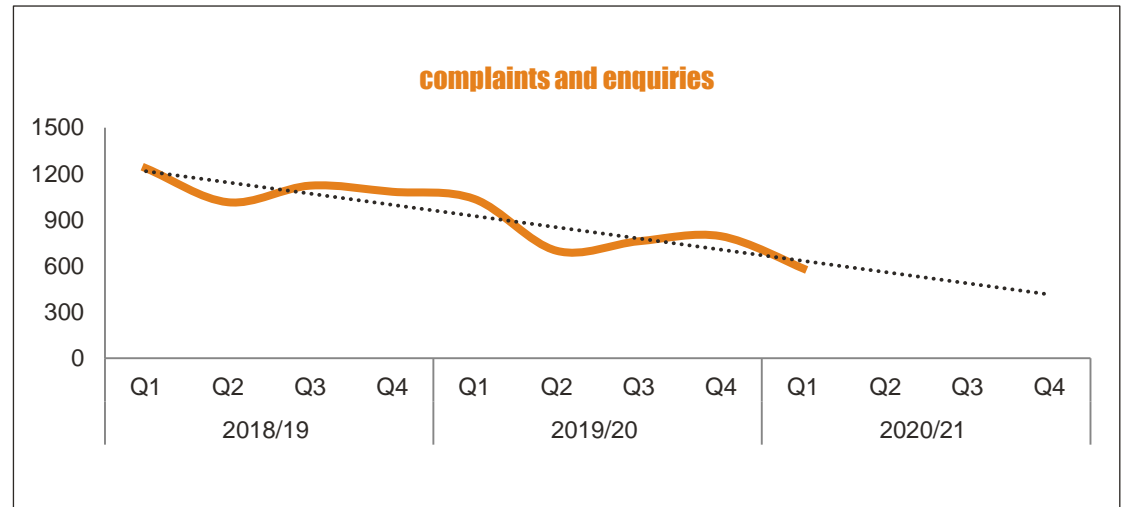
The chart (top right) shows the number complaints and enquiries recorded by WRS over a three year period relating to licensing. The chart (bottom right) shows the number of licensing applications.

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

The volume of licensing cases recorded during quarter one is a reduction of 51% compared to the previous year. With the hospitality sector and night time economy significantly affected by COVID-19 restrictions, this has led to a significant reduction in the volume of alcohol licensing applications - particularly temporary event notices. Overall, 17% of applications related to alcohol licensing whilst 46% related to private hire and hackney carriage vehicles.

Whilst the volume and nature of applications and varied, almost two thirds of service requests continue to be enquiries relating to alcohol and taxi licensing.

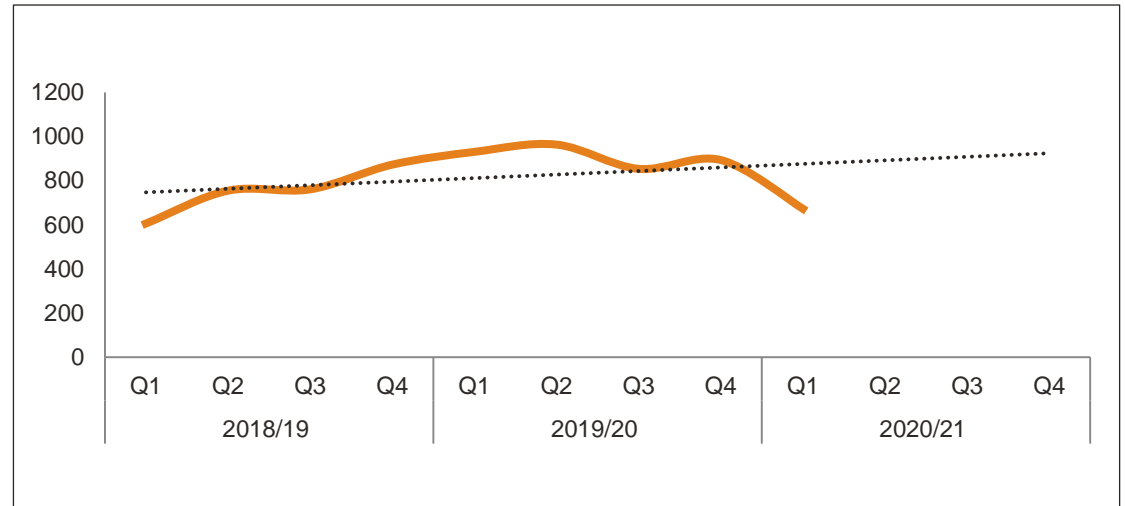


The chart (right) shows the number of planning enquiries completed by WRS over a three year period. The majority of these requests are consultations but can also include requests to discharge conditions.

Planning requests relate to the following;

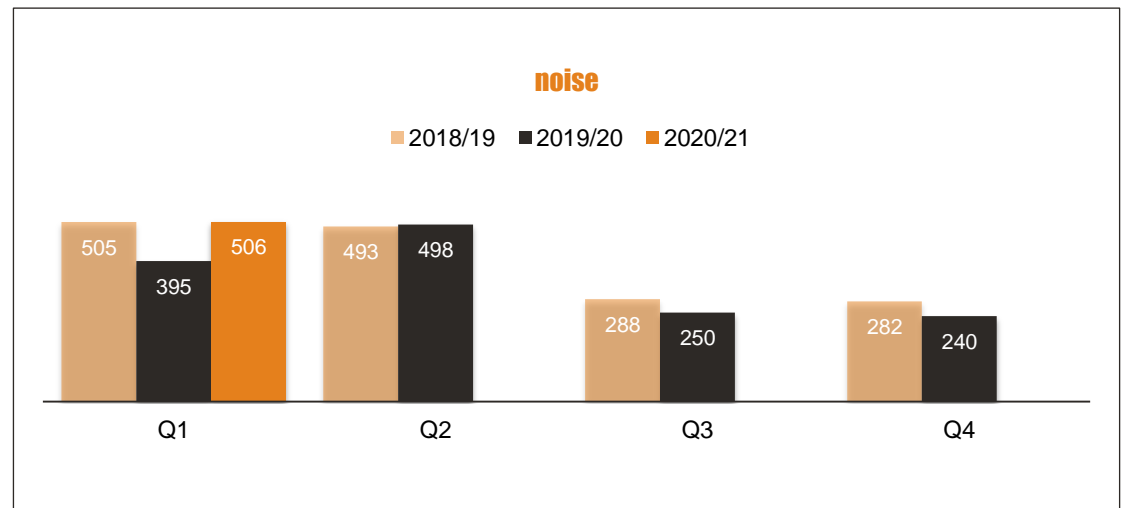
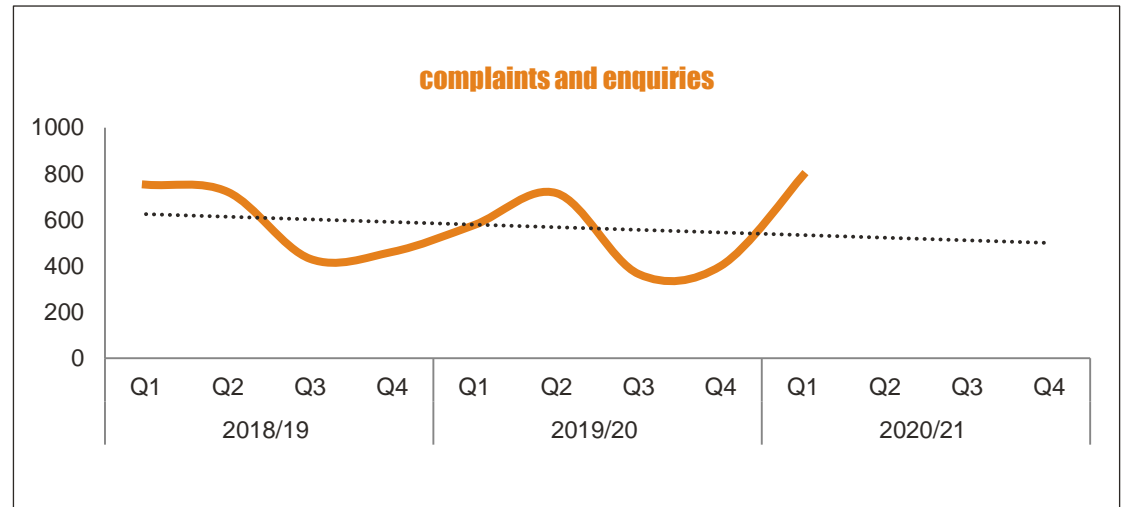
- Air Quality
- Contaminated Land
- Environmental Permitting
- Food
- Health and Safety
- Nuisance / Noise
- Private Water Supplies

Despite an upward trend in the level of planning enquiries, the total recorded during quarter one is a reduction of 24% compared to the previous quarter.. The type of enquiries however, has remained consistent; with 91% being consultations and 51% relating to contaminated land.



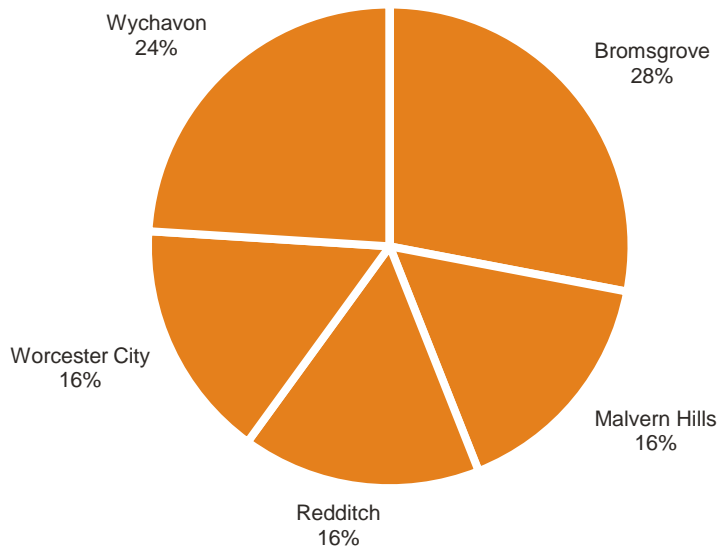
The chart (right) shows the number of complaints and enquiries recorded by WRS over a three year period relating to pollution. Types of cases recorded under this category include contamination incidents, air pollution (smoke, fumes and gases), light pollution and noise pollution. The chart (bottom right)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

The number of pollution cases has increased by 98% compared to the previous quarter; with the number recorded at its highest level for several years. This is largely due to the volume of domestic noise and smoke incidents - particularly bonfire incidents - which accounted for 80% of the cases received during quarter one. Whilst COVID-19 restrictions are a notable factor in the level of domestic incidents, 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.

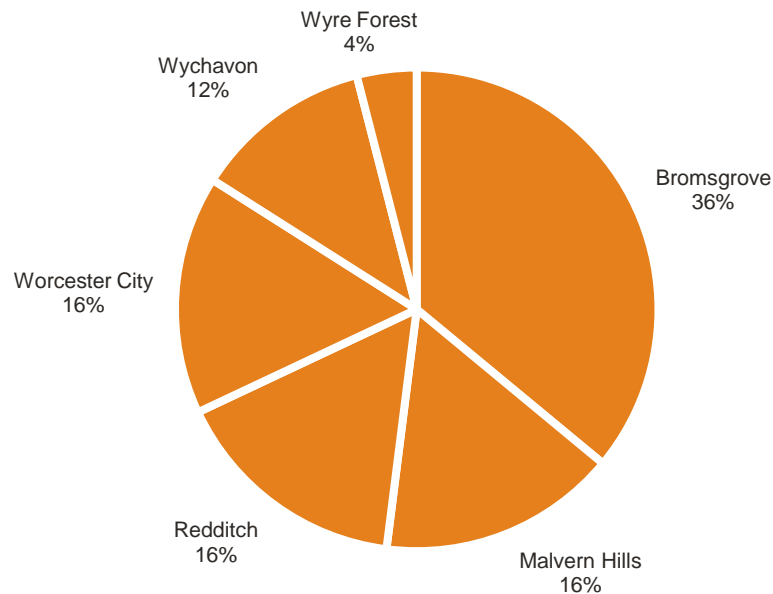
Note: Data shown on this page represents the 'year to date' and will continue to increase each quarter until the end of year report is published.



Ward	Total	Population	Rate
Perryfields	4	1,498	2.67
Lindridge	6	2,269	2.64
Rubery South	7	2,996	2.34
Lowes Hill	6	2,921	2.05
Broadway And Wickhamford	9	4,748	1.90
Avoncroft	6	3,270	1.83
Winyates	15	8,225	1.82
Badsey	6	3,320	1.81
Abbey	11	6,425	1.71
Link	11	6,427	1.71
Church Hill	13	8,072	1.61
Warndon	9	5,689	1.58
Droitwich Central	4	2,572	1.56
Evesham South	8	5,419	1.48
Saint John	13	9,004	1.44
Barnt Green And Hopwood	4	2,897	1.38
Battenhall	7	5,230	1.34
Pinvin	4	3,021	1.32
Dyson Perrins	6	4,701	1.28
Lodge Park	7	5,598	1.25
Bedwardine	10	8,316	1.20
Lovett And North Claines	7	5,974	1.17
Alfrick And Leigh	4	3,519	1.14
Sanders Park	4	3,576	1.12
Alvechurch Village	3	2,933	1.02

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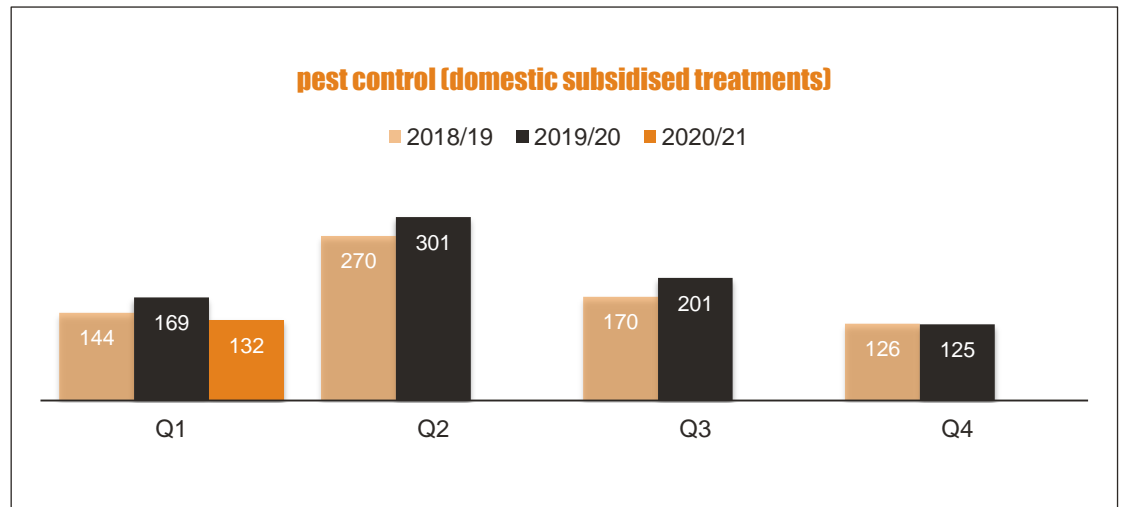
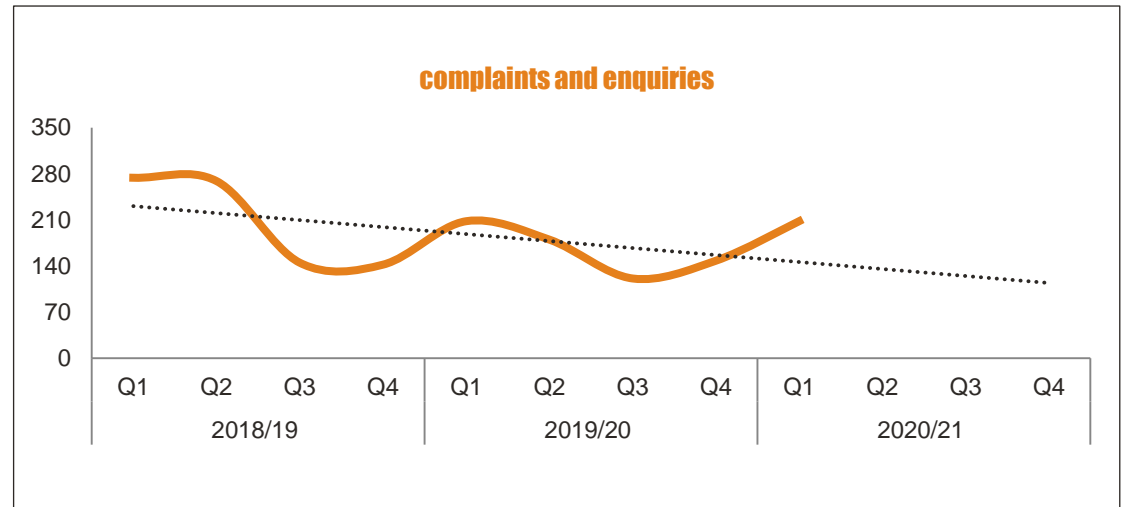


Ward	Total	Population	Rate
Droitwich Central	13	2,570	5.06
Cathedral	54	11,488	4.70
Upton And Hanley	18	4,153	4.33
Rainbow Hill	23	5,525	4.16
Lowes Hill	12	2,888	4.16
Charford	15	3,670	4.09
Charford	15	3,670	4.09
Catshill North	11	2,818	3.90
Offmore And Comberton	35	9,726	3.60
Barnt Green And Hopwood	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.

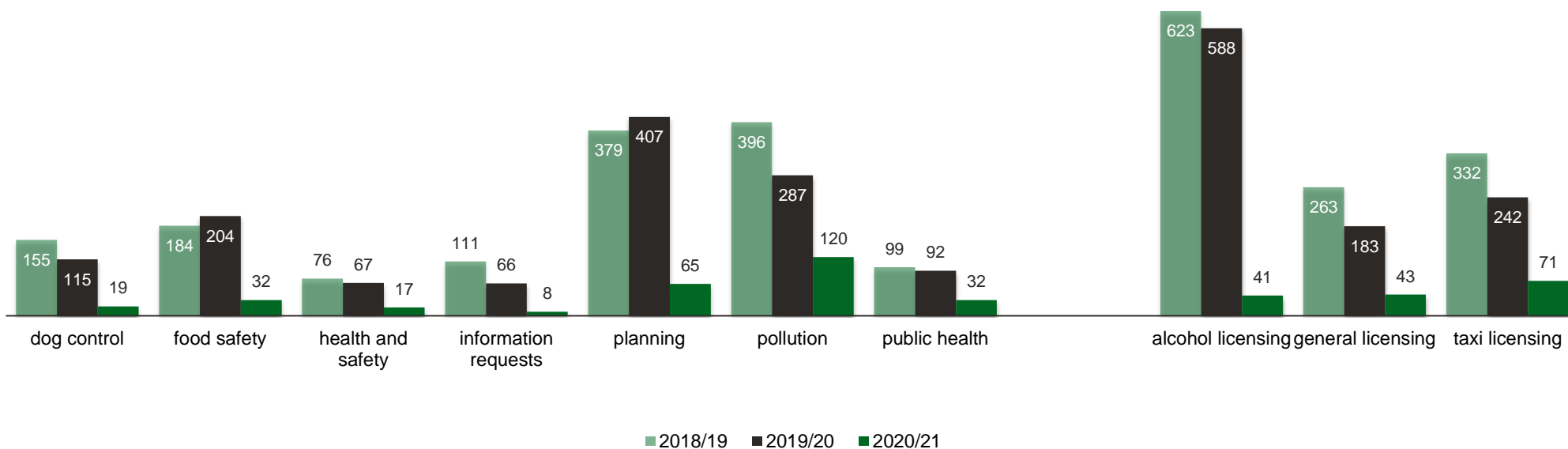
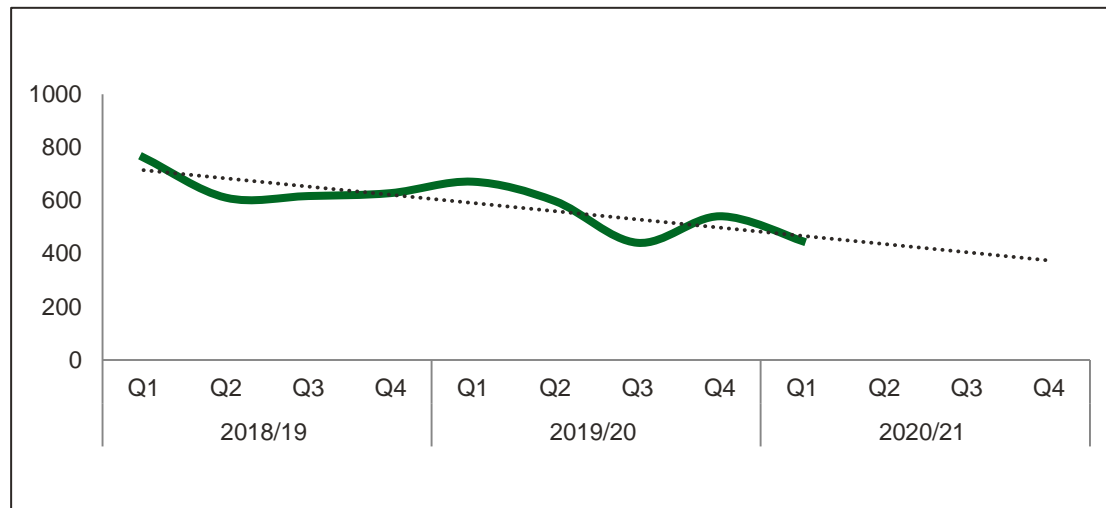
The number of public health cases received during quarter one is in line with the previous year, but an increase of 40% compared to the previous quarter. Two thirds of cases have related to pest control, with 43% of cases complaints about pests from neighbouring areas or properties.

The lower total of subsidised treatments is actually an increase, as previous years were split across four districts but this year it is only three that are offering the service. Anecdotally the 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. This is despite this being a traditionally quiet time for rat treatment requests. Of the 132 domestic treatments undertaken during quarter one, 57% were due to the presence of rats.



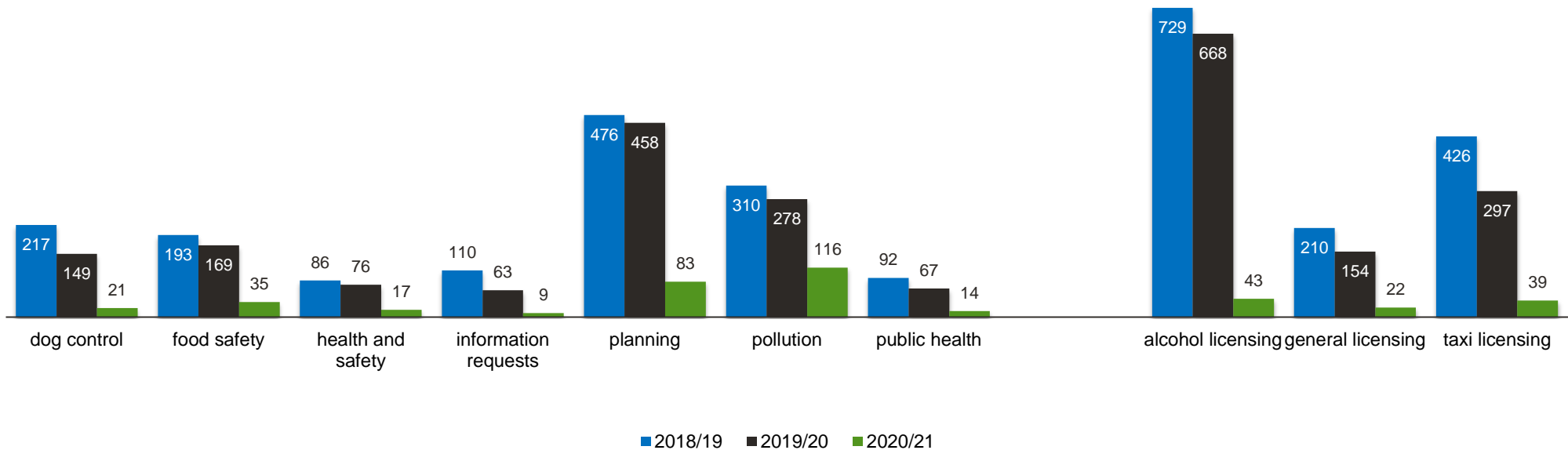
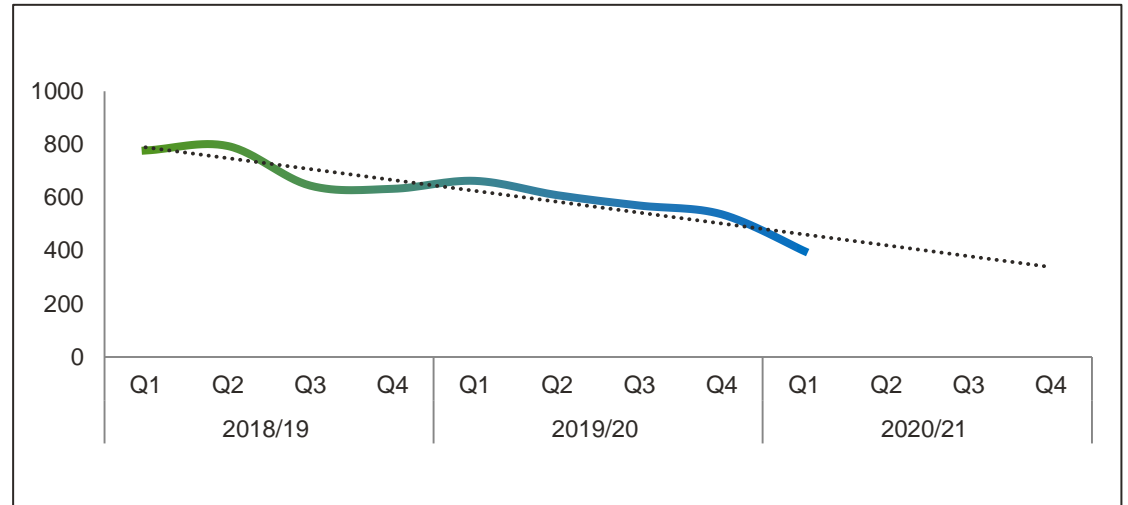
The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Bromsgrove district.

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.



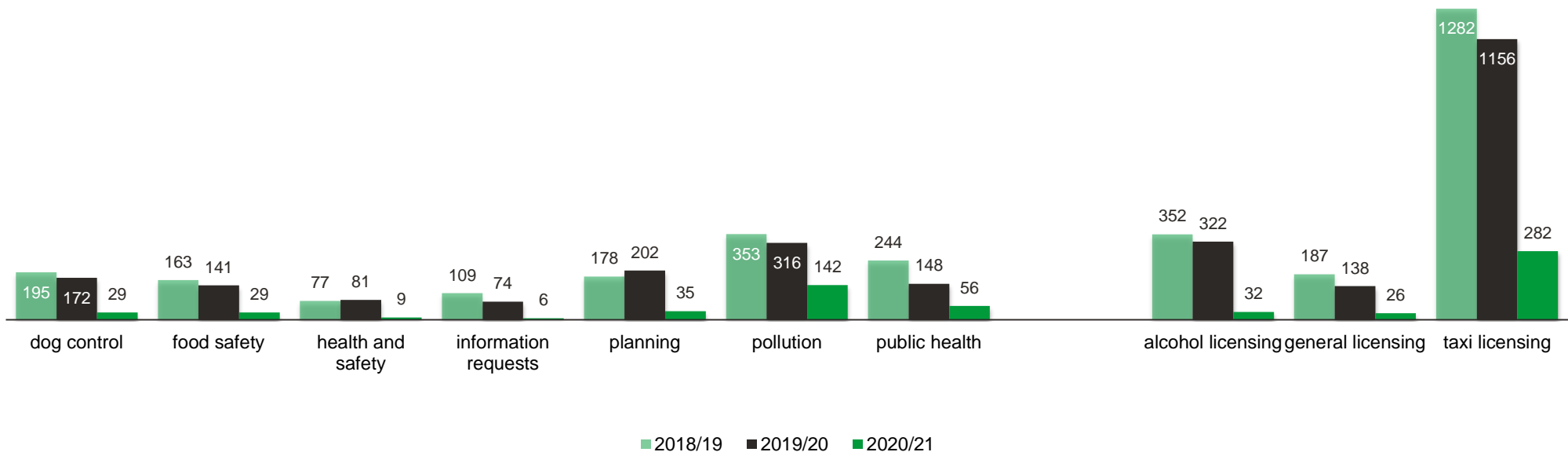
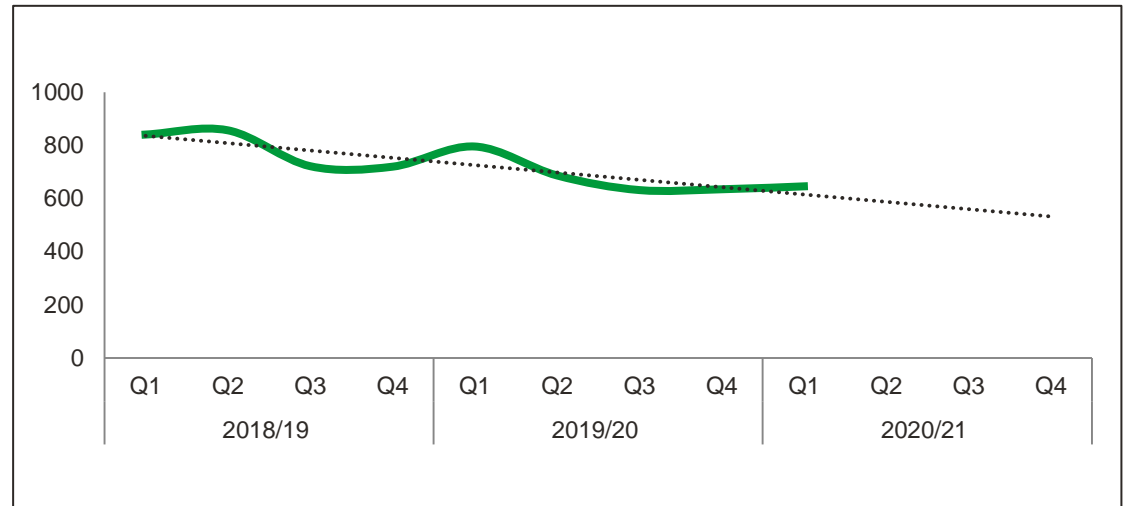
The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Malvern Hills district.

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.



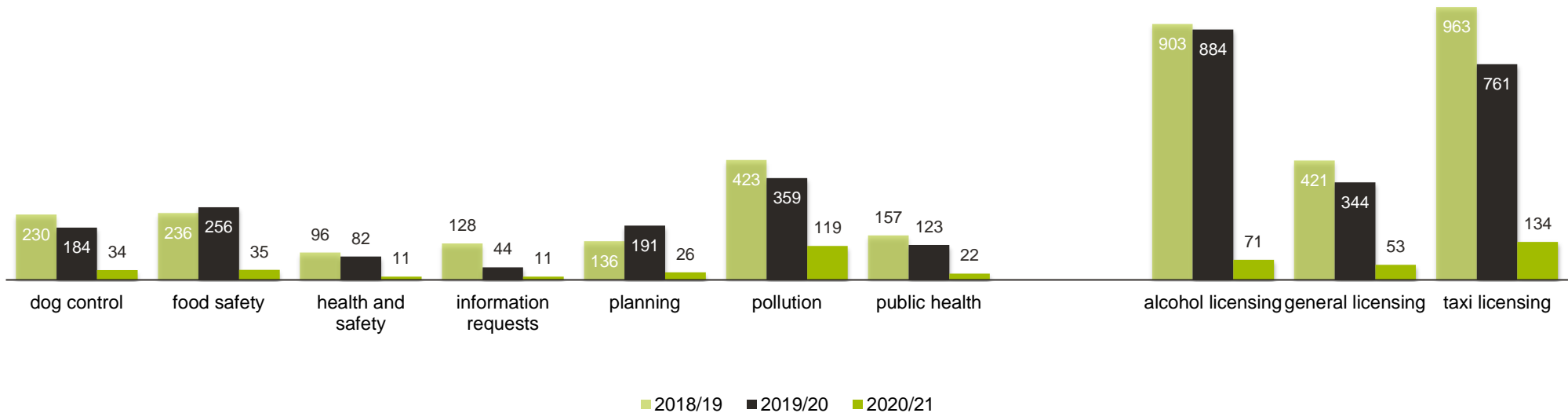
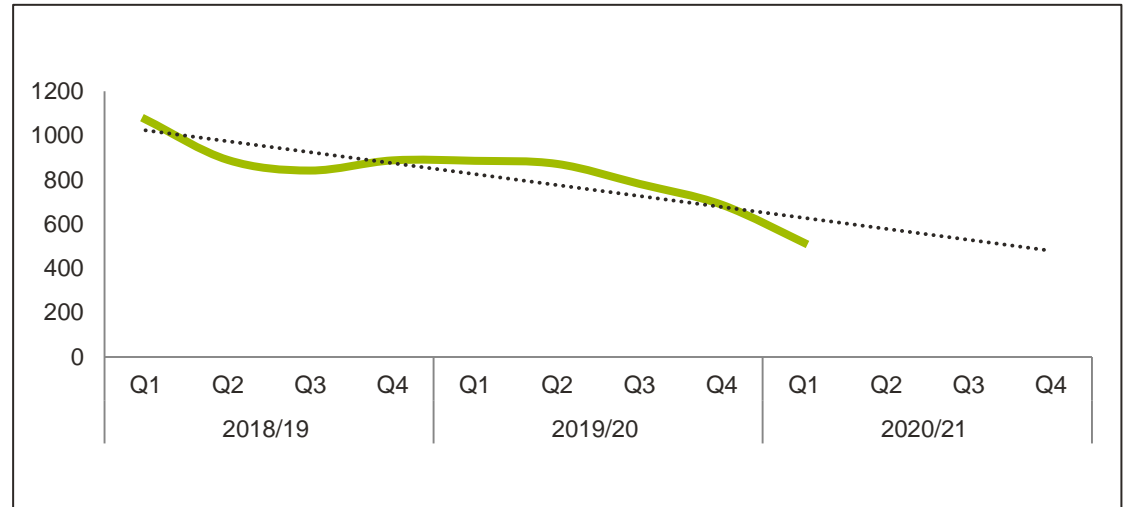
The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Redditch district.

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.



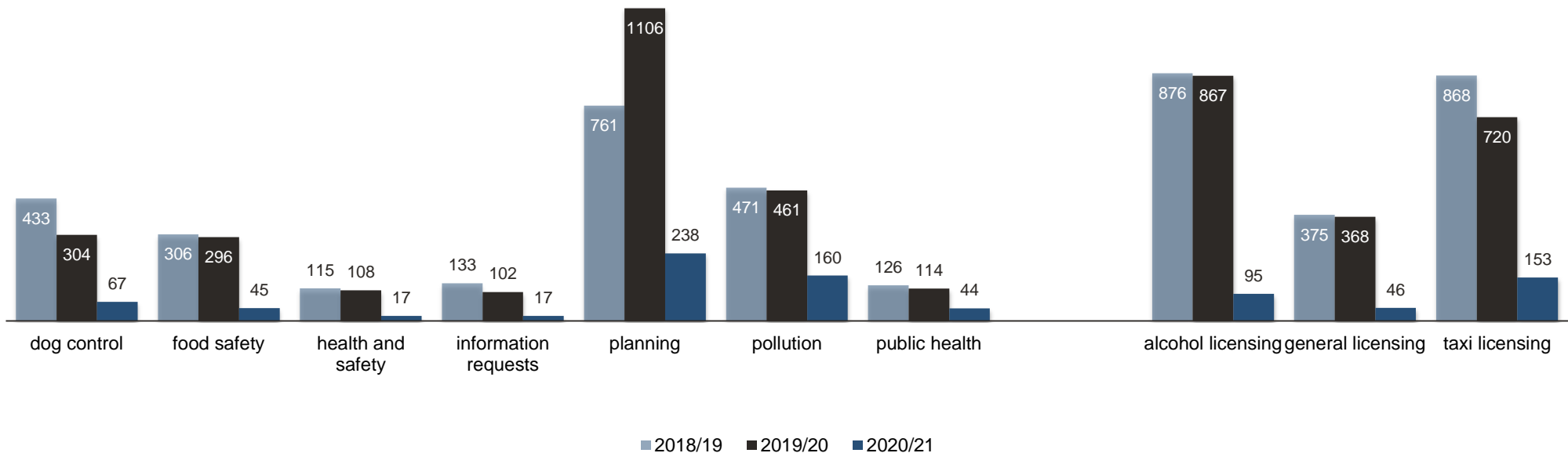
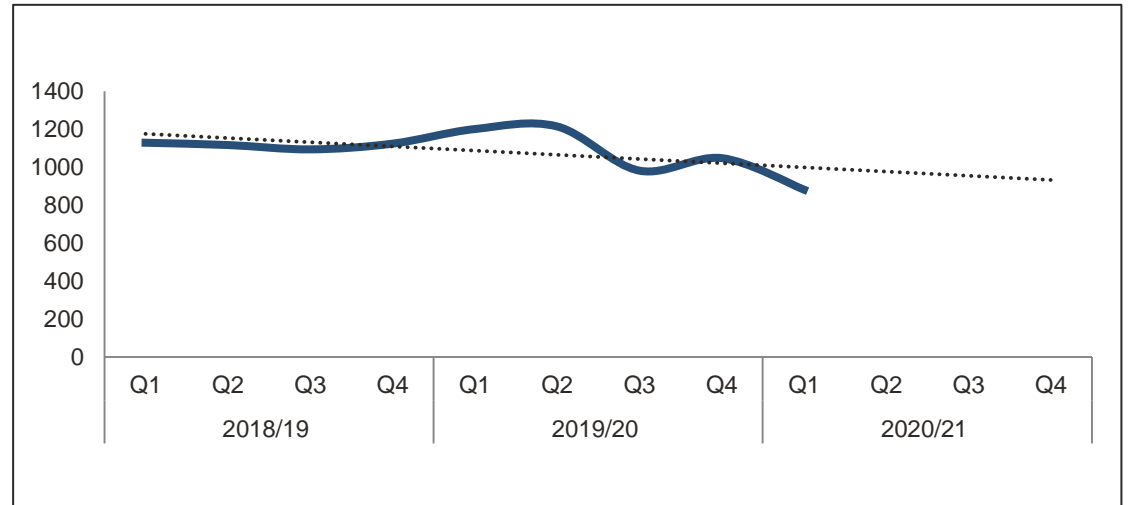
The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Worcester City district.

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.



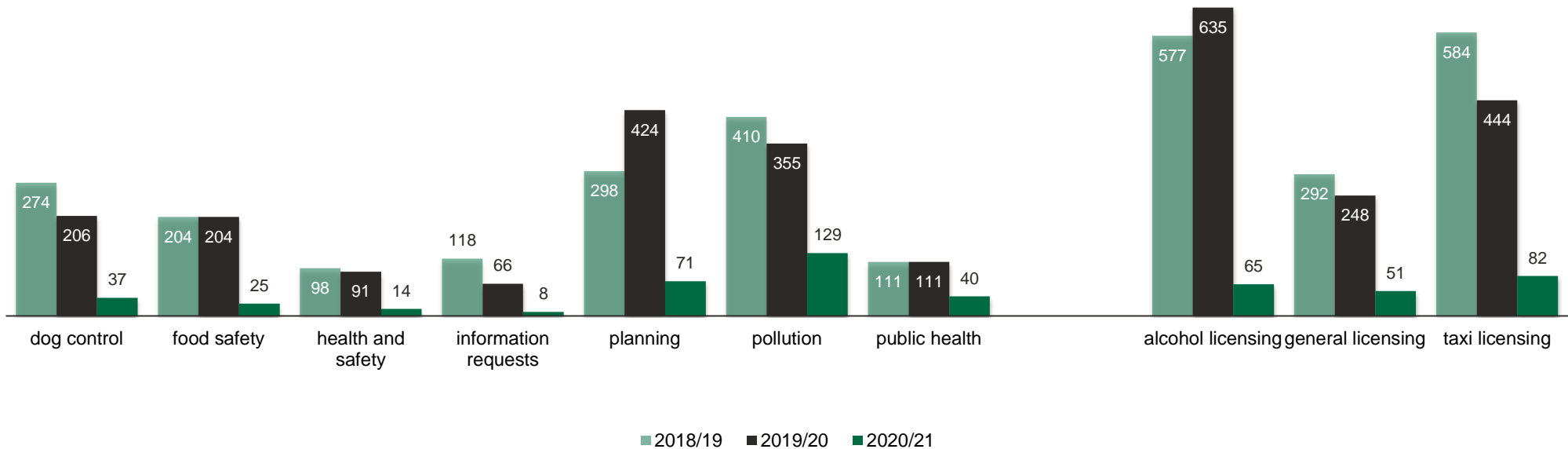
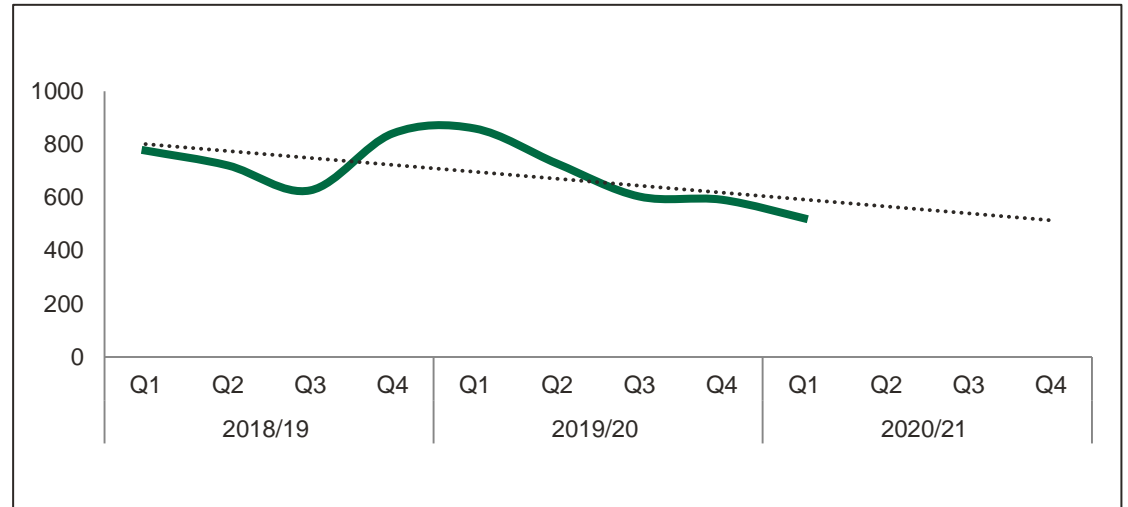
The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Wychavon district.

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.

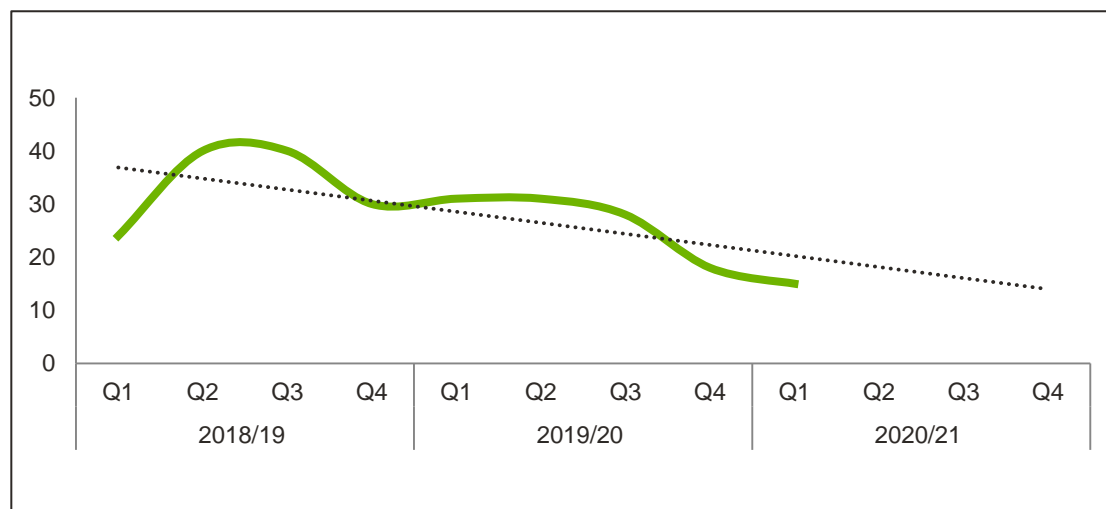


The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Wyre Forest district.

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.

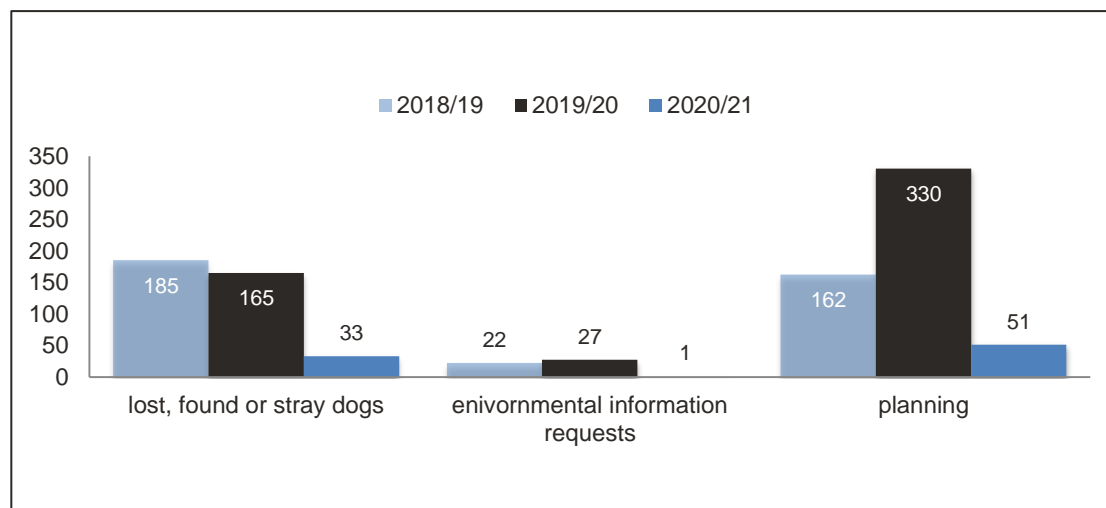
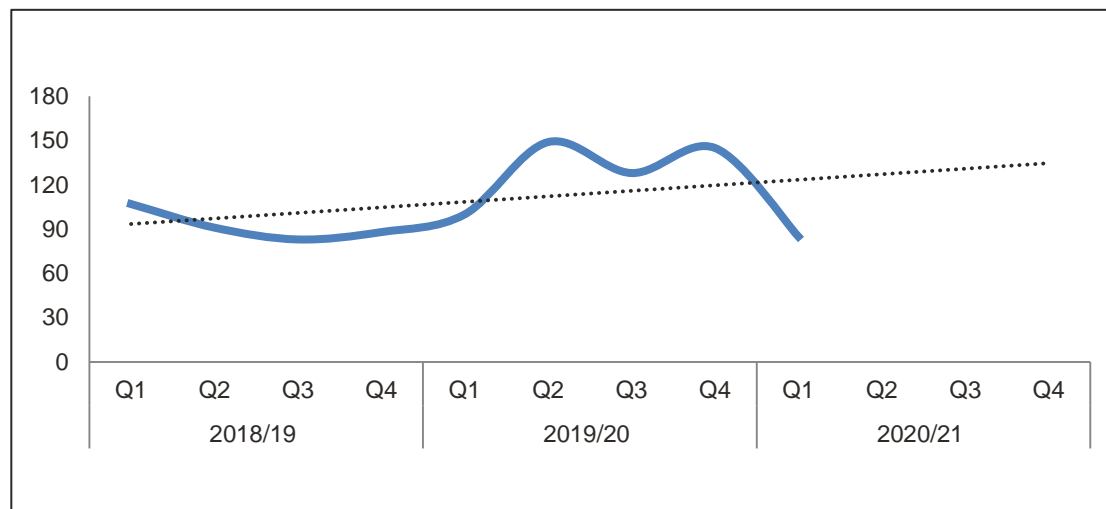


The dog control work WRS undertake for Cheltenham Borough Council is part of a three year contract with two other Gloucestershire authorities (from 2017) to deliver the collection, kennelling, returning of dogs to owners and rehoming of stray dog functions. The contract was renewed following delivery 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 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

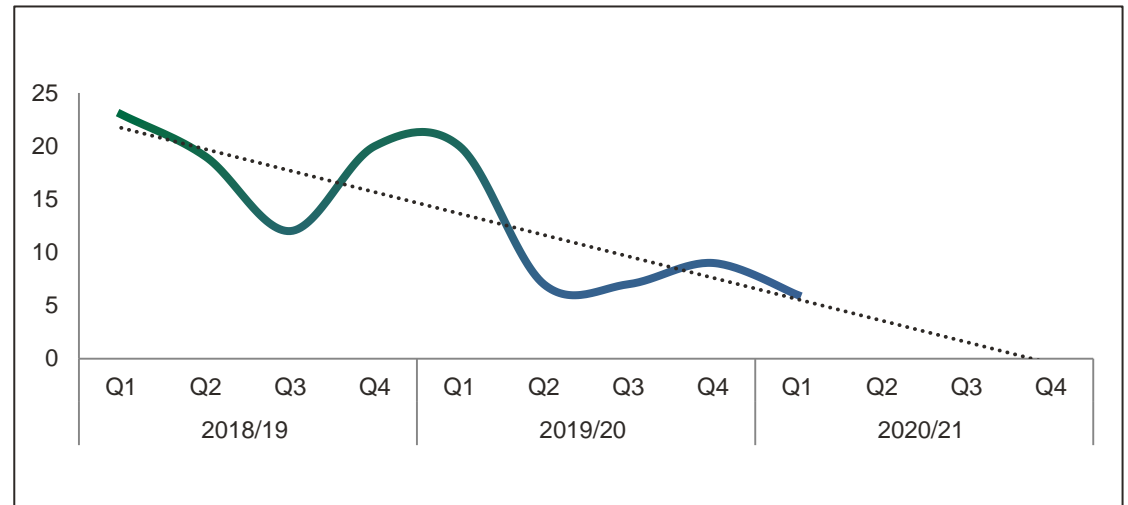


The dog control work WRS undertake for Gloucester City Council is part of a three year contract with two other Gloucestershire authorities (from 2017) to deliver the collection, kennelling, returning of dogs to owners and rehoming of stray dog functions. The contract was renewed following delivery by 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 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.

Planning work continues on a similar trend as seen in 2019. Nevertheless there has been some decline generally in planning work across the board due to the Covid-19 outbreak. With this uncertainty in place it is currently difficult to make any predictions on demand for the forthcoming year. WRS postponed PPC inspections due to the lockdown and some businesses mothballing their activities due to staff furlough. Inspection will remain under continuous review in Q2 and it is anticipated that physical inspections will re-commence in early autumn to allow businesses to re-establish production.



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 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.

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

