

Worcestershire
Regulatory Services

Supporting and protecting you

Activity Report | 2020-21



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Foreword

Welcome to the second activity data report for 2020/21.

The second quarter of the year continued to be dominated by Covid 19 work, however the gradual re-opening of the economy led to a significant volume of our normal day-to-day work coming back on-line, creating significant pressures that the service had to bear. Gradually, through July and August we saw the re-opening of the economy but with a range of controls in place. Through September, as case numbers began to grow nationally, we started to see changes to the controls that officers had to enforce. Dealing with changes in covid legislation at very short notice has become a way of life for the team.

The pattern of dog control complaints followed last year's very closely, rising through Q2. Food complaints also headed back towards more normal levels as food businesses re-opened to having the public on their premises. Proactive food visits remain low as the FSA continues to put a hold on the usual inspection programme. Health and safety complaints and enquiries went up, probably as Covid compliance has helped businesses focus on the broad range of these issues. Accident reports however were on trend.

Licensing numbers were up from a low level in Q1, almost certainly down to Covid but we did not see the large volume of temporary events that would otherwise feature at licensed premises over the summer period for events, fayres and festivals. Clearly the Covid controls meant that many of these did not happen.

Requests for planning support also began to climb from the low during the first period of lockdown and, as might be expected, as the planning system re-opened so the volume of Environmental Information and similar requests also began to rise.

Nuisance and public health complaints show their usual summer increase and, this year was busier than the previous year, with noise complaints for the period being higher than the equivalent period the previous year by a significant number. This is likely to relate to the numbers of people working from home and expectations in the domestic environment. The absence of business noise during lockdown may also have made things that people had previously taken for granted more visible, and of course many people are working at home at hours they normally aren't there. Daytime life in our towns and the city can be noisier than many think.

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



Simon Wilkes
Head of Regulatory Services

Community Environmental Health

The focus for Q2 has been responding to the significant additional responsibilities brought about by the Covid-19 Pandemic whilst maintaining the service for investigating statutory nuisances.

In respect of demand, the team dealt with over 900 Covid-related service requests and incidents across the County between 1 July 2020 and 30 September 2020 inclusive.

Worcestershire's Local Outbreak Response Team (LORT) was established on 1 July 2020, when Worcestershire's Outbreak Control Plan was published. It comprises of WRS Environmental Health Officers and Public Health Practitioners operating under the direction of the Director of Public Health.

We continued to build on the local outbreak management process throughout Q2 that is seen as the key mechanism for controlling the spread of Covid 19 going forward, developing our outbreak investigation and back-tracing response where WRS expertise in communicable disease control and health and safety at work is proving invaluable. Beyond this WRS Officers continue to support investigations into outbreaks at schools, care homes and the larger high risk businesses enforced by HSE.

The arrangement was immediately called into action when the team was asked to support Herefordshire Public Health in their investigation into a major farm outbreak on the county border, where over 100 Covid cases were identified in overseas workers. The epidemic continues to create major learning curves for all and the lessons learned from the Herefordshire incident were soon put to the test with two outbreaks in Worcestershire, the first at a food packaging firm which distributes vegetables and salad products and the second at a large food manufacturer.

In September officers were involved in providing advice and guidance to a public house in Welland where two members of staff and a member of the public were found to be infected. This generated social media interest and this contrasting small business outbreak demonstrates that Covid can affect any workplace setting. Hence investigations are supplemented by an ongoing WRS programme of providing targeted business advice and support countywide, particularly in respect of the hospitality sector, to help ensure Covid safe workplaces and businesses.

All routine food inspection work remained suspended in Q2; 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.

Further detail on our Covid response and the work of the Local Outbreak Response Team can be found in the information reports presented to Board:

Joint working with Public Health to control Covid-19 Outbreaks in work settings 1 October 2020;

Covid-19 Response 18 June 2020;

Licensing

The easing of lockdown measures towards the end of Q1 allowed Licensing to move towards a transition phase, doing more 'business as usual' activity. Most of the processes introduced during Q1 were still kept in force as the move towards online applications and providing advice remotely was, and continues to, work well. The biggest challenge faced by the team this quarter was the introduction of the Building and Planning Act 2020 whereby the team had to work at fast pace to introduce Pavement Licensing across all districts in a very short time frame. The expertise of the team, in collaboration with all the districts, allowed for WRS to be ahead of the game and implement these requirements ahead of schedule.

The team started to get out more this quarter in a number of areas. They looked at being more proactive with puppy breeding investigations in light of Lucy's Law that was introduced in April 2020 and this area of work has continued to raise awareness especially due to the fact more people have been at home due to lockdown and finding other sources of generating income. Animal inspections commenced and officers also attended three Zoo inspections across the districts in Bromsgrove, Wychavon and Wyre Forest.

The team proactively worked with Community Environmental Health on enforcement activity, mainly in the night time economy, and ensuring licensed premises were adhering to covid standards.

We ended the quarter with getting face to face licensing appointments underway and have been working with all the districts so that these can commence in a safe and proactive way.

Technical Services

In the second quarter the dog warden team have once again been busy we have received contact about over 300 dogs, 17 of which were reported as lost or loose. WRS was successful in reuniting 214 dogs with their owners and rehoming 30 with recognised animal rehoming charities. We cared for three dogs while their owners have been in hospital one of which is now back with their owner. Sadly one dog reported to us was found deceased.

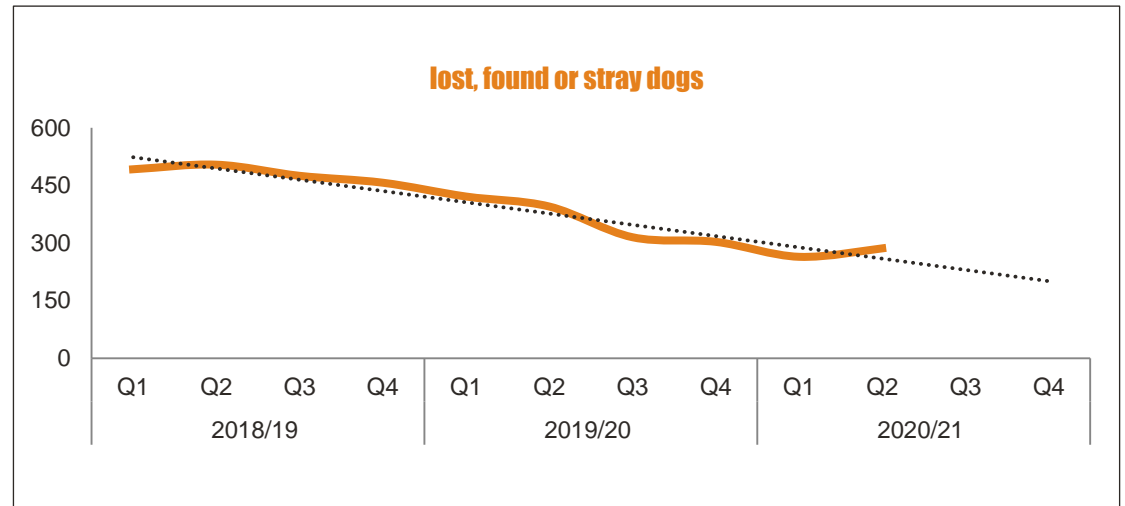
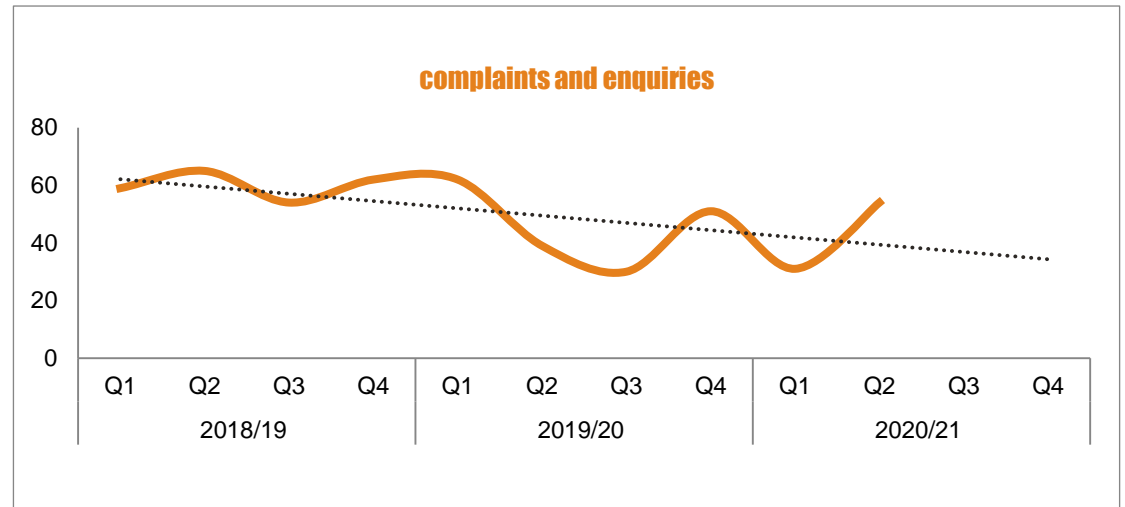
Due to the Covid 19 lockdown air monitoring work was suspended between March but resumed in June. Due to the unprecedented reduction of road vehicles it is anticipated that all of the air monitoring currently undertaken with diffusion tubes will not be usable for the purpose of providing annual average 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.

Despite a minor increase this quarter, the number of stray or lost dogs reported continues to be a reduction of between 27% and 42% compared to previous years. The nature of the cases recorded remains consistent however, with 66% 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.

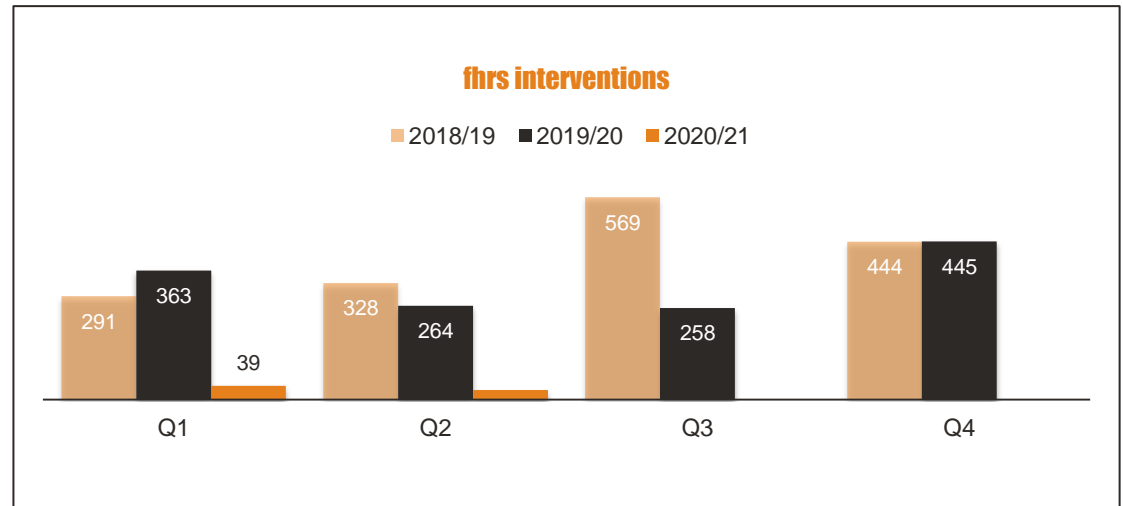
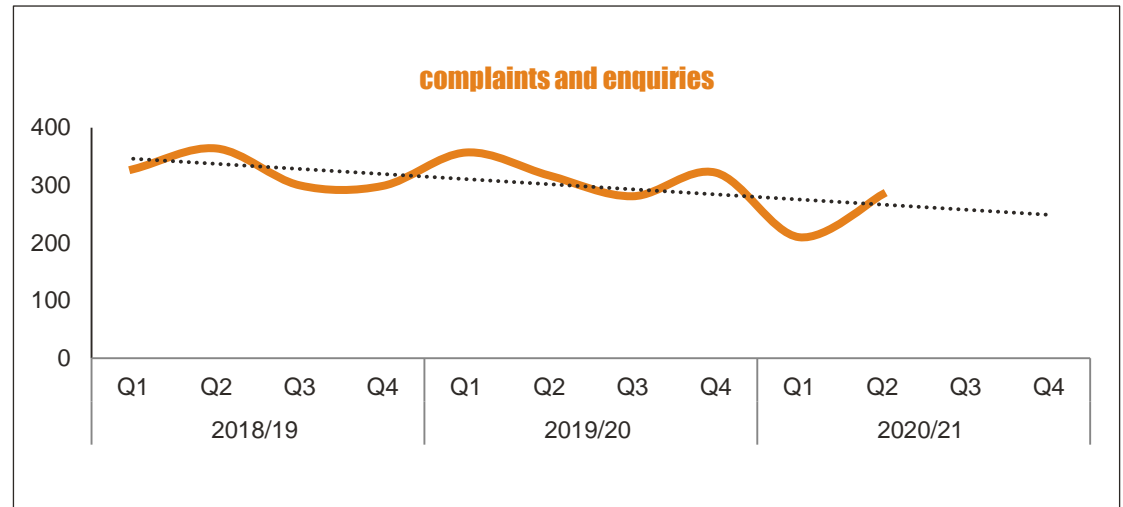
In general, the service receives a higher number of enquiries than complaints. Based on the 43 complaints received during quarter one, 21 related to dog fouling and persistent straying, 16 related to dangerous dogs and 6 related to dog welfare.



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.

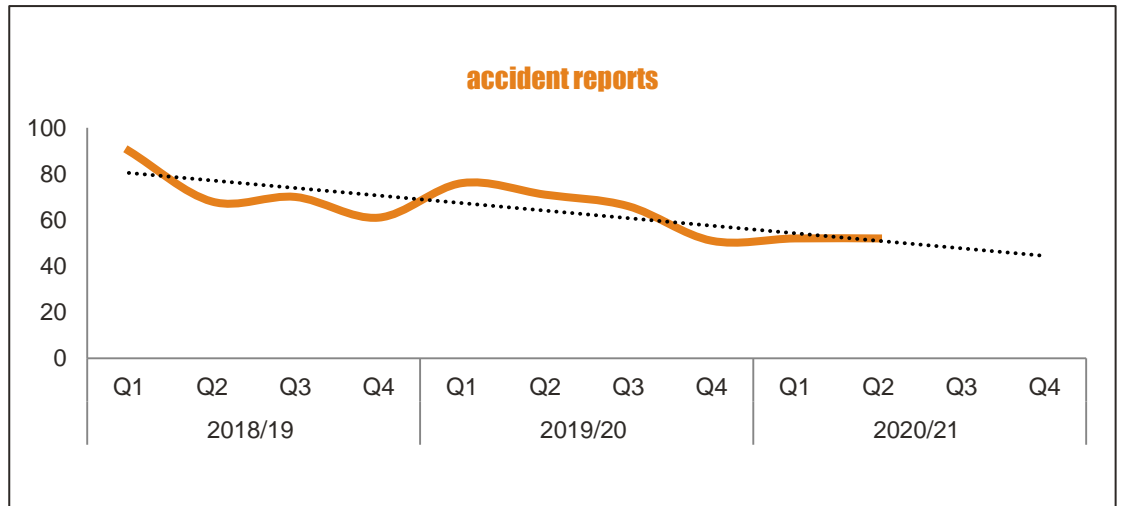
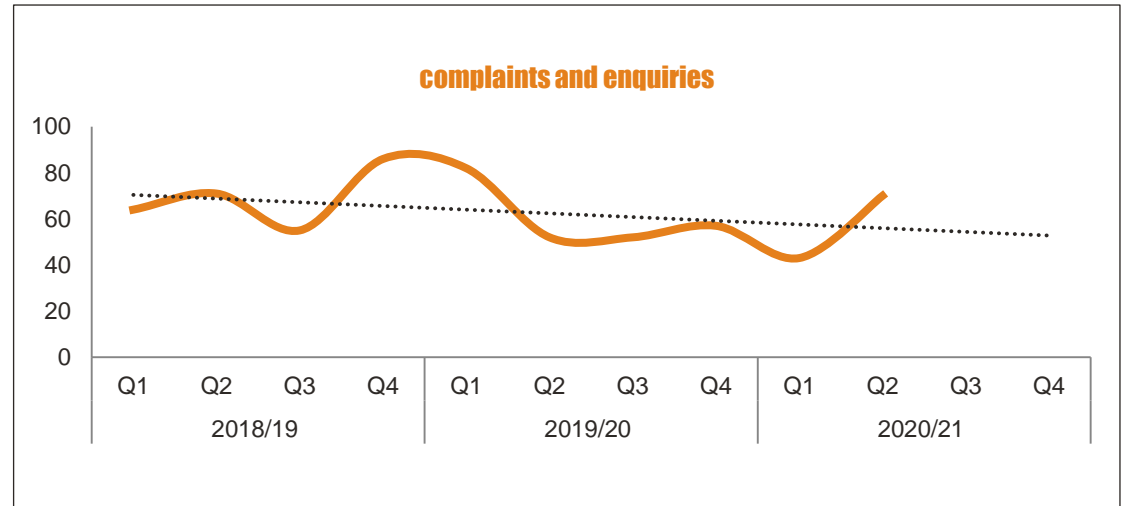
The chart (top right) shows the number of complaints and enquiries recorded by WRS over a three year period relating to food safety. Types of cases recorded under this category include complaints about food products, hygiene of premises complaints and requests for business advice. The chart (bottom right) shows the number of interventions conducted by WRS at premises included in the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme, commonly known as FHRS.

The number of food safety cases received represents an increase of 35% compared to the previous quarter. This increase coincides with the easing of lockdown restrictions and the reopening of a number of hospitality businesses from 4th July. Approximately 43% of cases were enquiries, whilst 72% of complaints related to products purchased from food premises.



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.

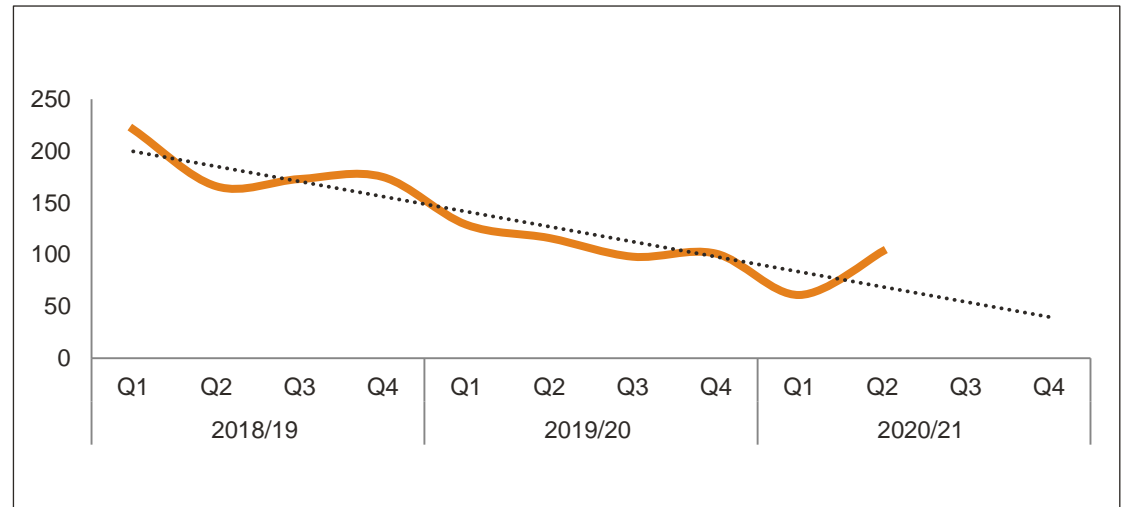
In parallel with food safety, the number of cases relating to health and safety at work has also increased during quarter two. The volume and nature of accident reports has remained consistent, with 40% of reports this year relating to injuries where a worker is incapacitated for more than seven days.



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

During quarter 1 this year, COVID-19 distractions reduced the demand of Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Requests received by the service. Once lockdown restrictions lifted however, Environmental Information requests associated with house purchases increased and following the summer holiday period WRS have received a significant increase in FOI requests that would have usually been submitted earlier in the year or are related to COVID related activity.



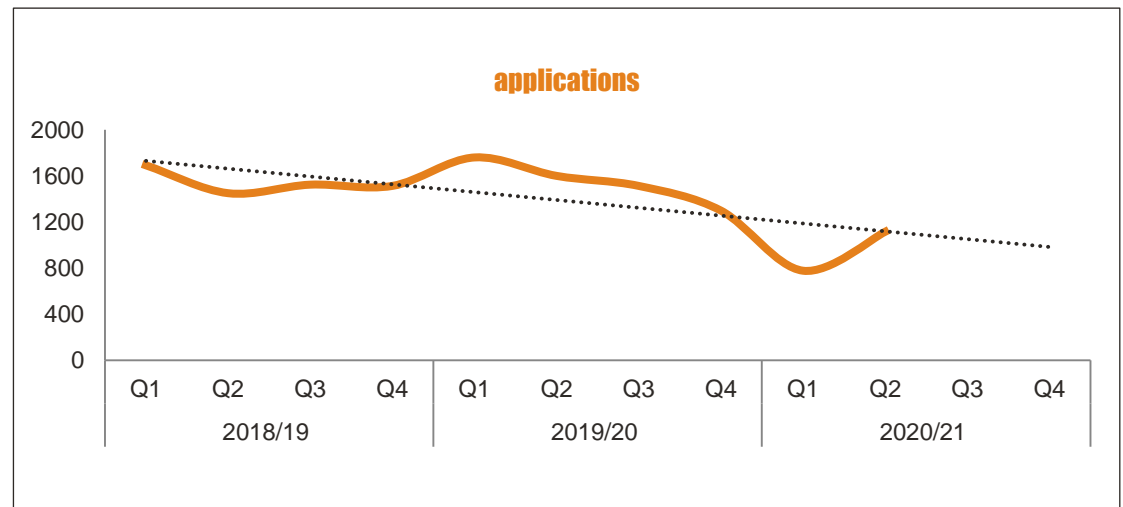
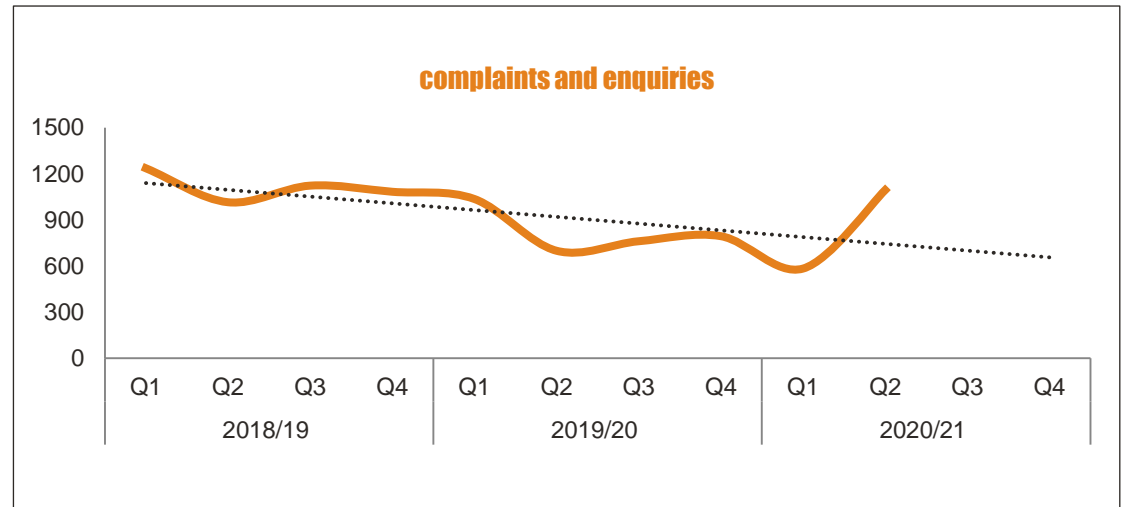
The chart (top right) shows the number complaints and enquiries recorded by WRS over a three year period relating to licensing. The chart (bottom right) shows the number of licensing applications.

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 received during quarter two is an increase of 61% compared to the previous quarter. 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, 28% of applications related to alcohol licensing whilst 36% related to private hire and hackney carriage vehicles.

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

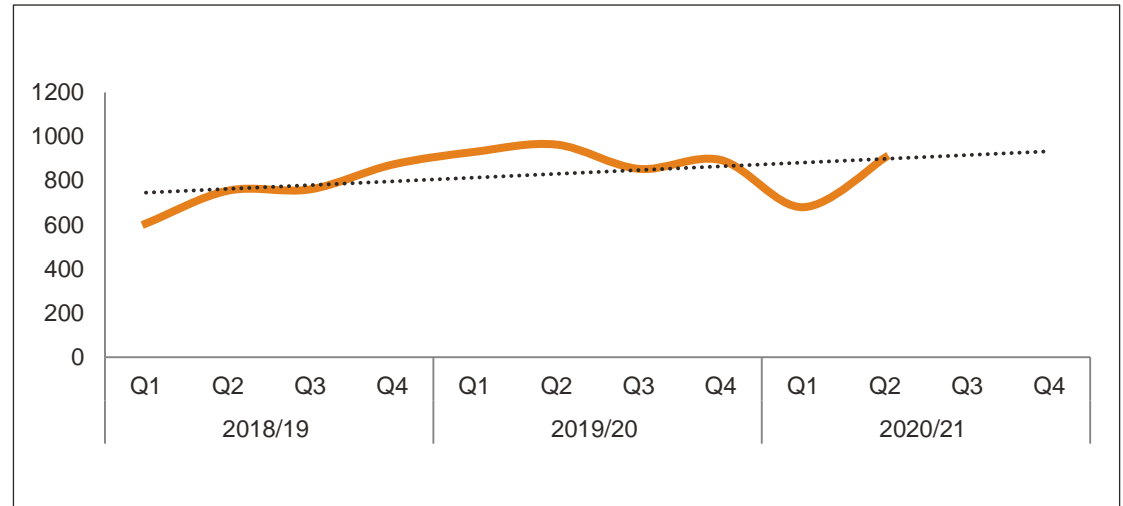


The chart (right) shows the number of planning enquiries completed by WRS over a three year period. The majority of these requests are consultations but can also include requests to discharge conditions.

Planning requests relate to the following;

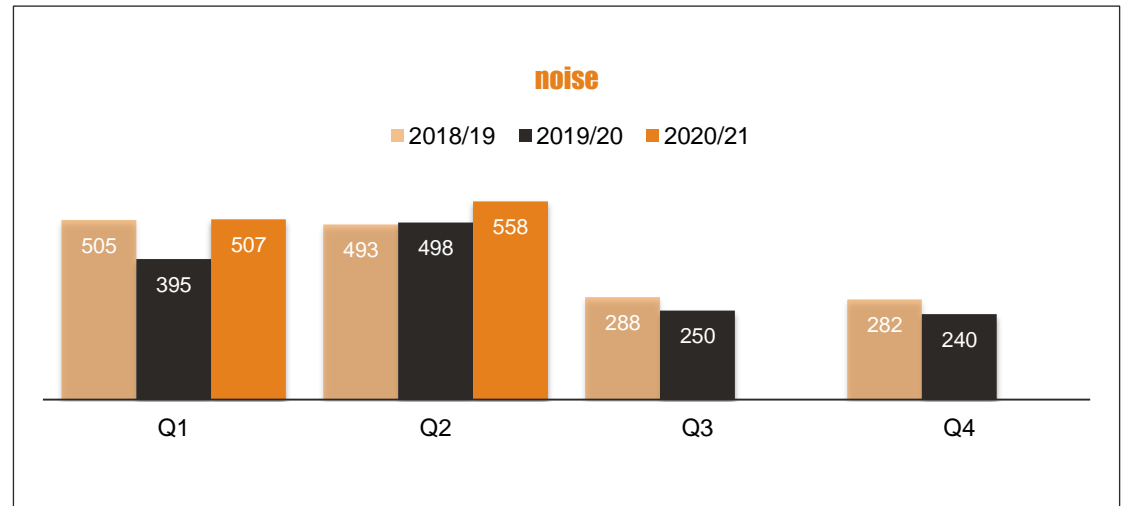
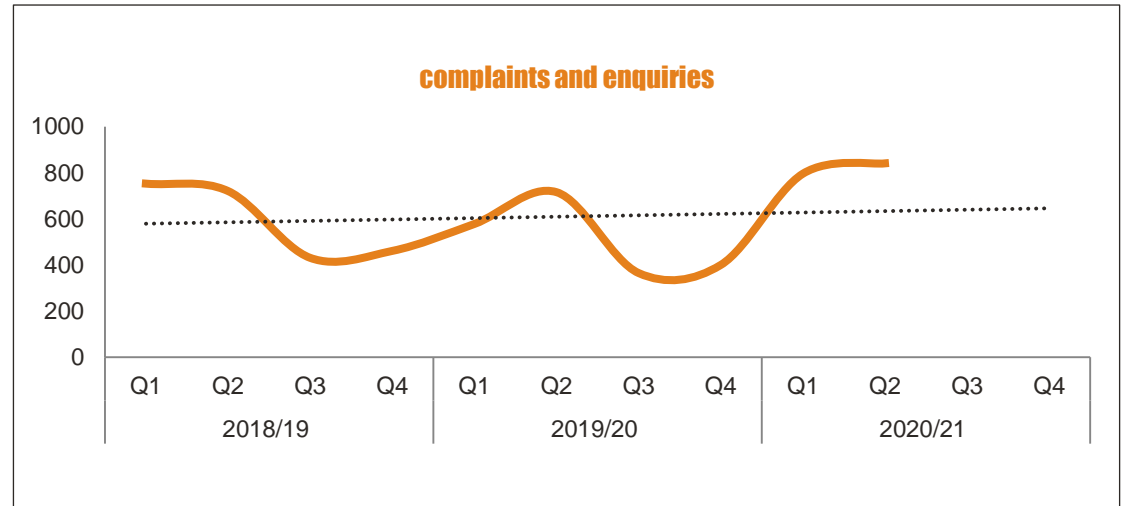
- Air Quality
- Contaminated Land
- Environmental Permitting
- Food
- Health and Safety
- Nuisance / Noise
- Private Water Supplies

The number of planning enquiries received represents an increase of 33% compared to the previous quarter; and continues the upward trend. Approximately 92% of enquiries were consultations, whilst 53% related to contaminated land.



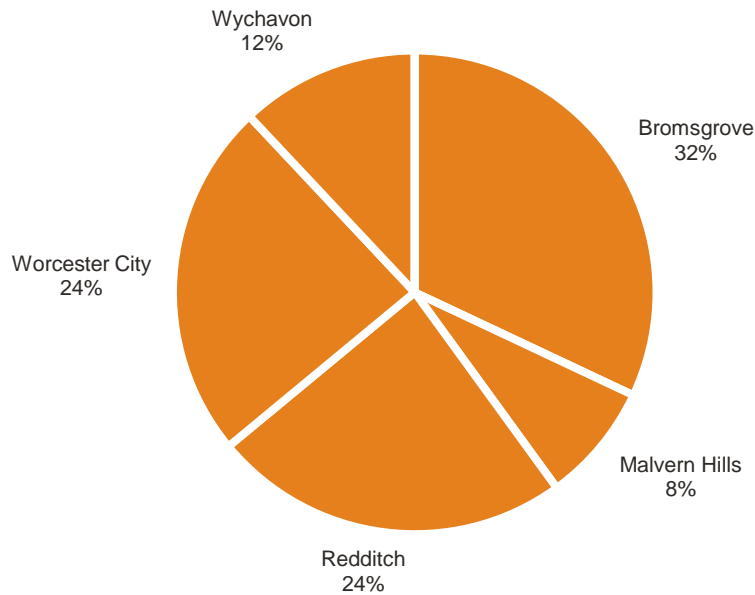
The chart (right) shows the number of complaints and enquiries recorded by WRS over a three year period relating to pollution. Types of cases recorded under this category include contamination incidents, air pollution (smoke, fumes and gases), light pollution and noise pollution. The chart (bottom right)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

The number of pollution cases received was consistent with the previous quarter, and remains at its highest level for several years. Approximately 43% of cases related to domestic noise, whilst 21% related to smoke incidents and a significant proportion of bonfire incidents. 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.

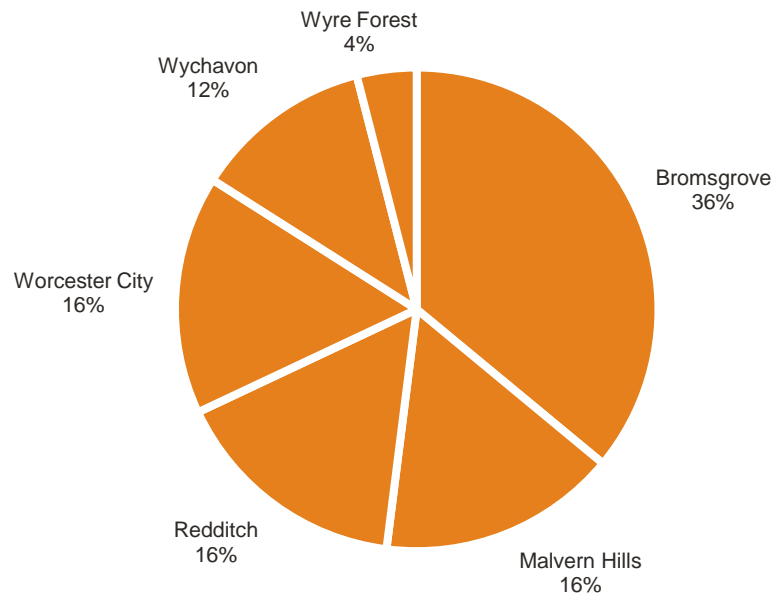
Note: Data shown on this page represents the 'year to date' and will continue to increase each quarter until the end of year report is published.



Ward	Total	Population	Rate
Norton	14	3,404	4.11
Perryfields	6	1,498	4.01
Lowes Hill	11	2,921	3.77
Central (Redditch)	25	6,744	3.71
Avoncroft	12	3,270	3.67
Abbey	22	6,425	3.42
Chase	21	6,170	3.40
Lodge Park	18	5,598	3.22
Lindridge	7	2,269	3.09
Rubery South	9	2,996	3.00
Winyates	24	8,225	2.92
Cathedral	34	11,794	2.88
Saint John	25	9,004	2.78
Church Hill	22	8,072	2.73
Badsey	9	3,320	2.71
Crabbs Cross	15	5,640	2.66
Evesham South	14	5,419	2.58
Hill Top	6	2,333	2.57
Bedwardine	21	8,316	2.53
Sanders Park	9	3,576	2.52
Charford	9	3,656	2.46
Arboretum	15	6,151	2.44
Gorse Hill	14	5,786	2.42
Broadway And Wickhamford	11	4,748	2.32
Warndon	13	5,689	2.29

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.

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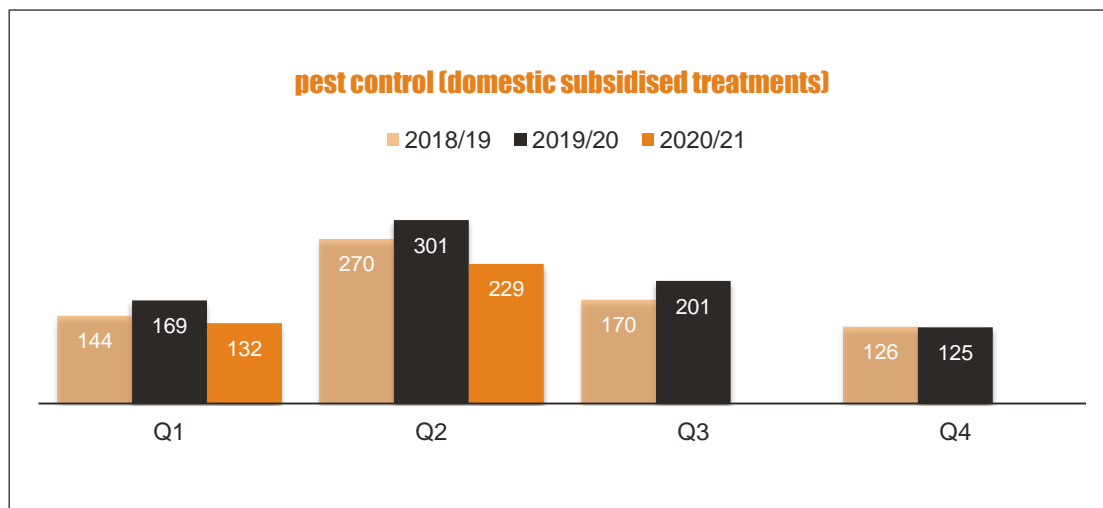
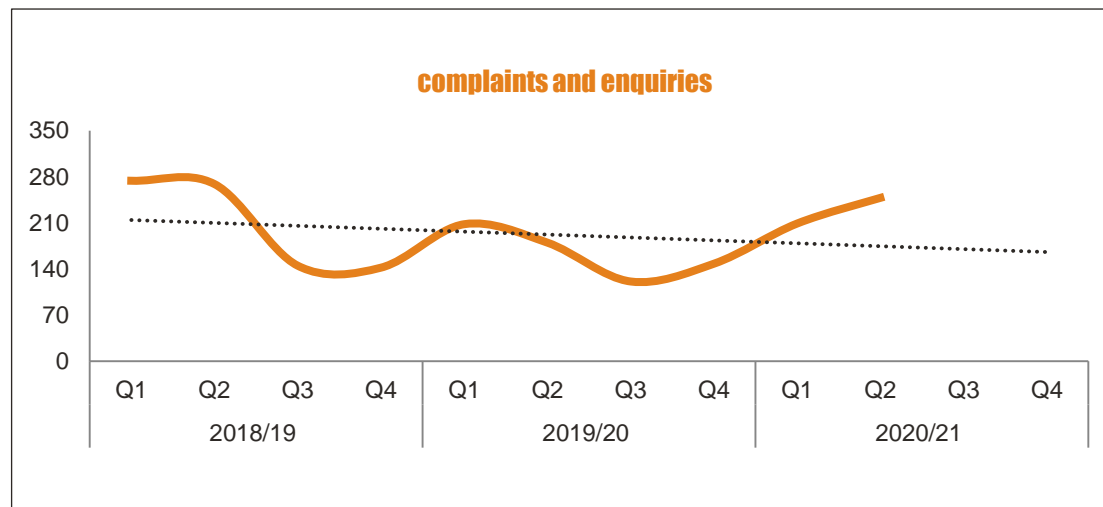


Ward	Total	Population	Rate
Droitwich Central	13	2,570	5.06
Cathedral	54	11,488	4.70
Upton And Hanley	18	4,153	4.33
Rainbow Hill	23	5,525	4.16
Lowes Hill	12	2,888	4.16
Charford	15	3,670	4.09
Charford	15	3,670	4.09
Catshill North	11	2,818	3.90
Offmore And Comberton	35	9,726	3.60
Barnt Green And Hopwood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

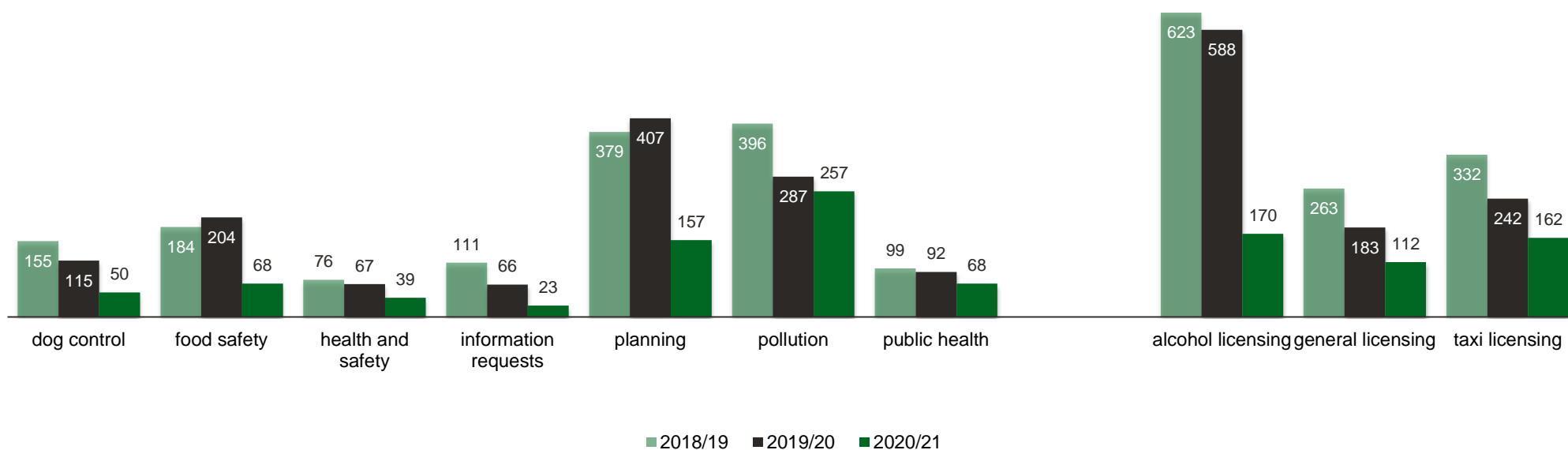
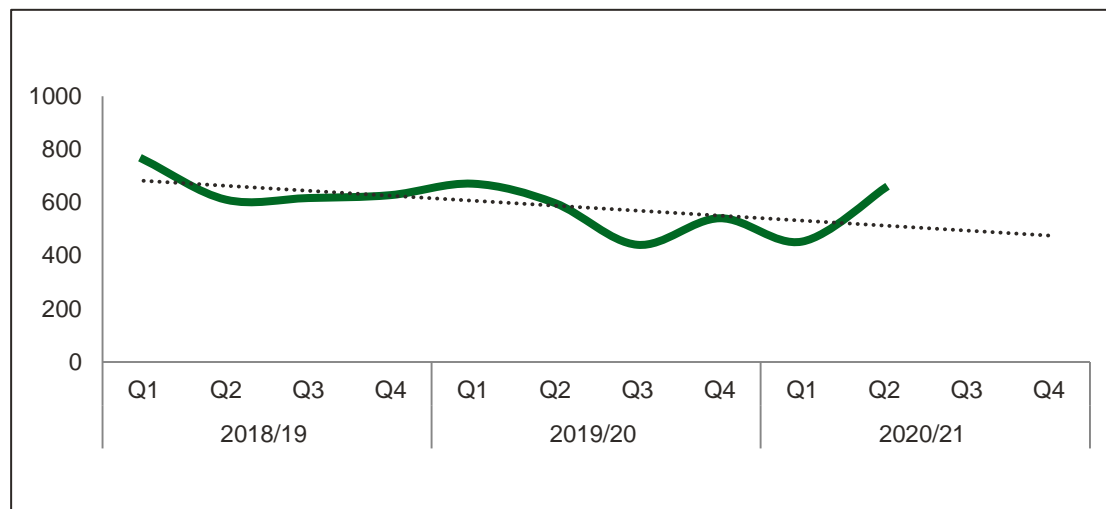
The number of public health cases received is an increase of 18% compared to the previous quarter, but broadly in line with previous years. Approximately 64% of cases related to pest control, with a high proportion of cases relating to pest control issues caused by the activity of neighbouring residents or businesses.

The lower total of subsidised treatments is actually an increase, as only three districts are offering a service compared to four in previous years. 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 229 domestic treatments undertaken during quarter two, 41% were due to the presence of wasps whilst 37% were due to rats/



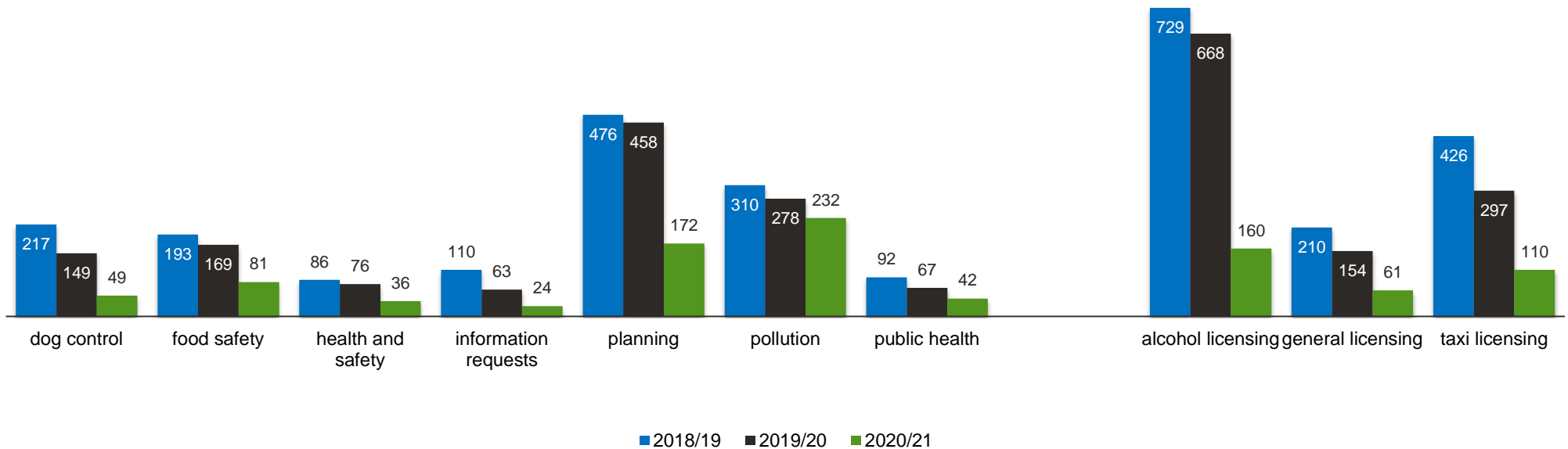
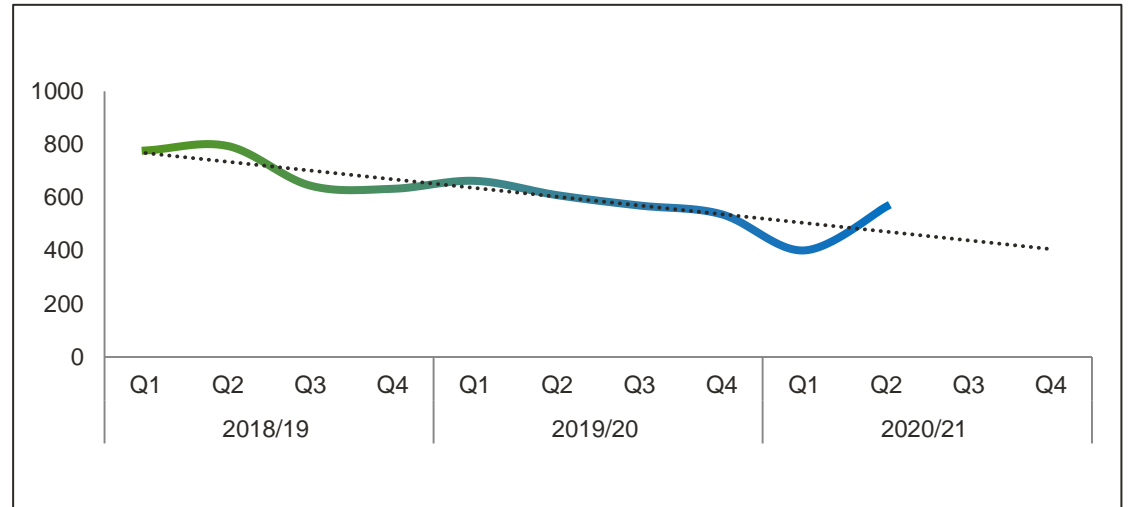
The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Bromsgrove district.

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.



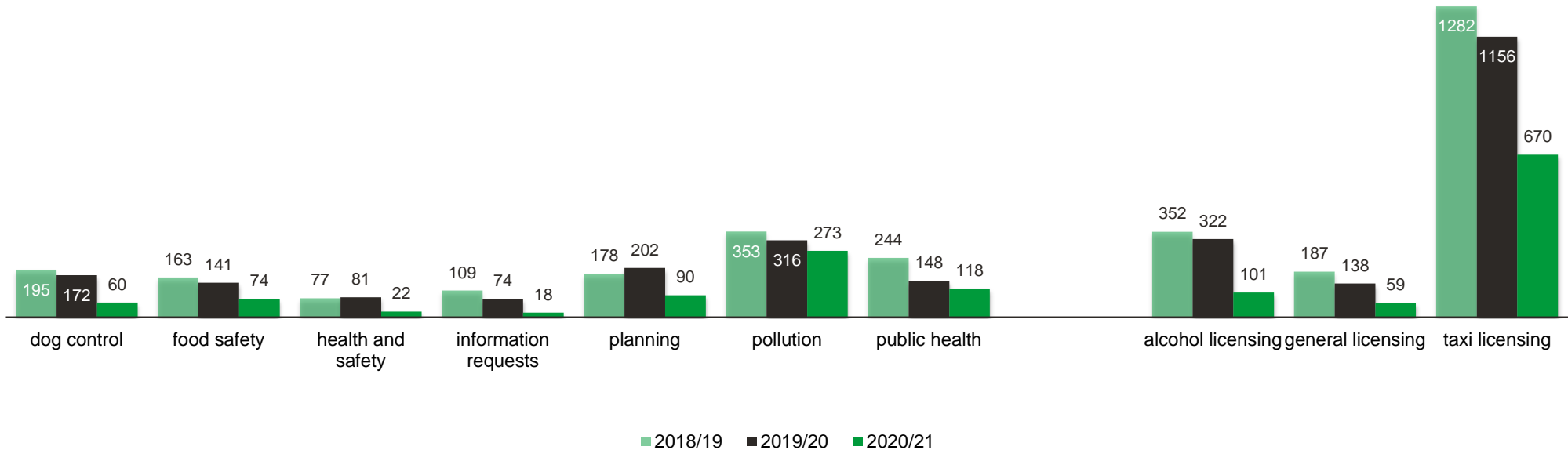
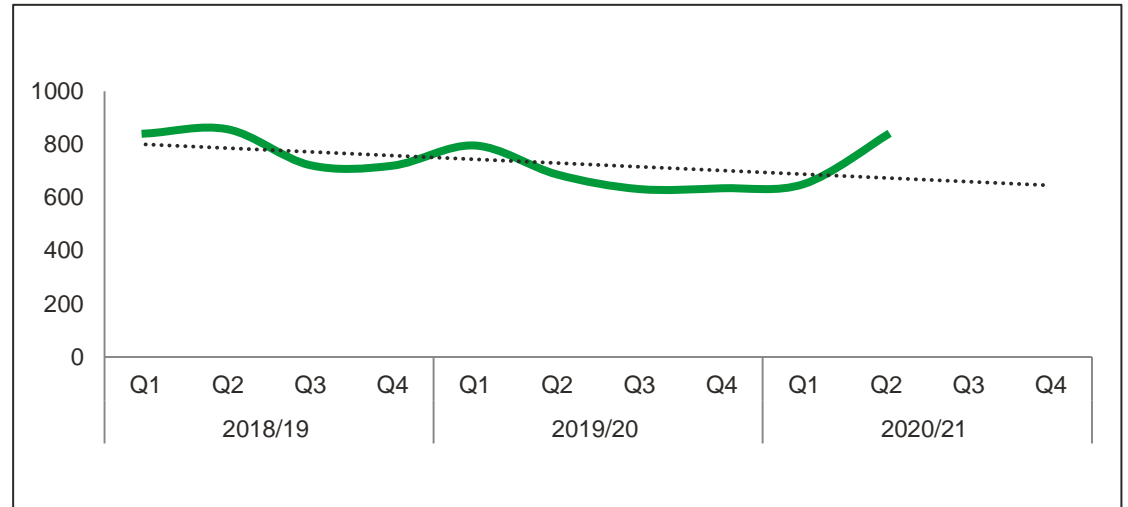
The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Malvern Hills district.

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.



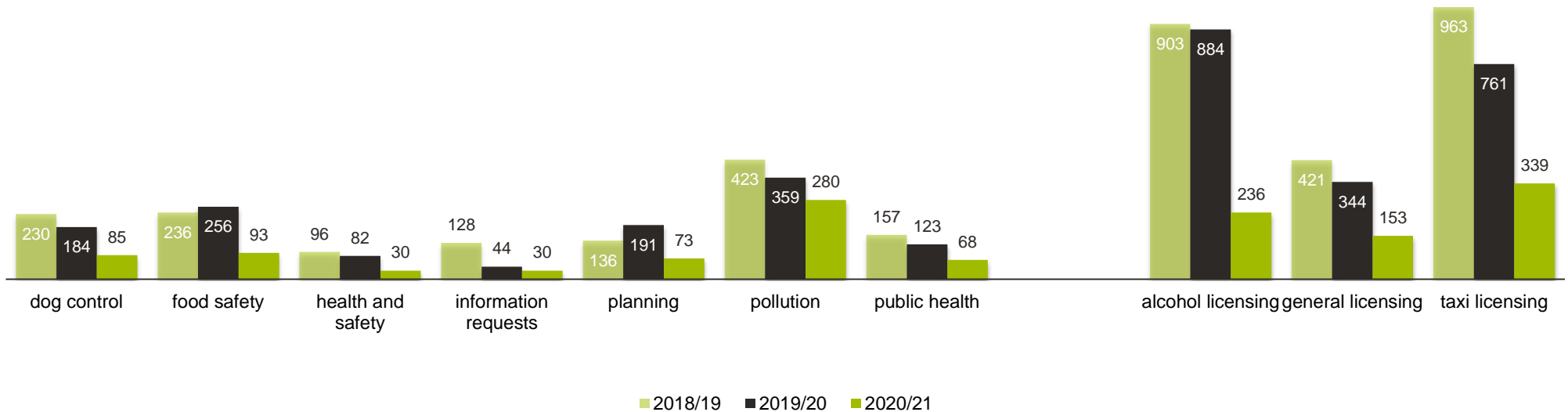
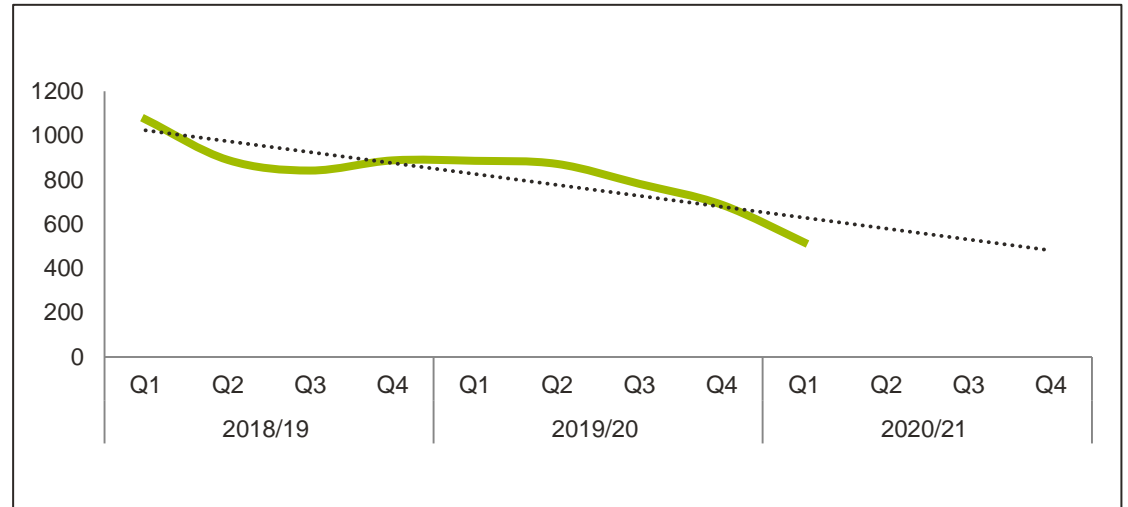
The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Redditch district.

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.



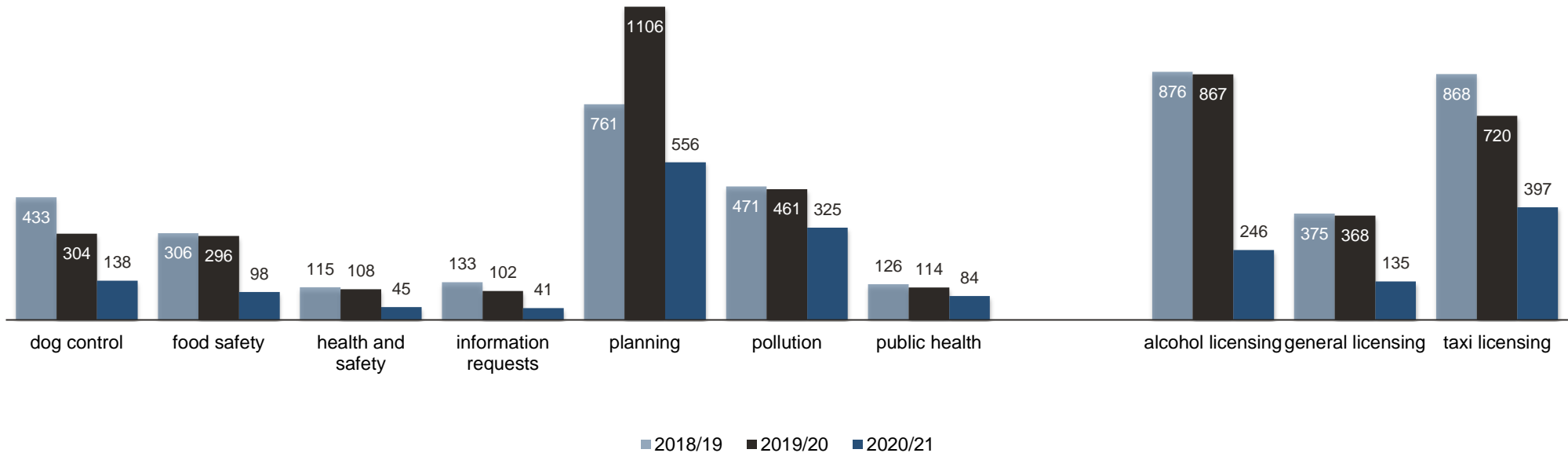
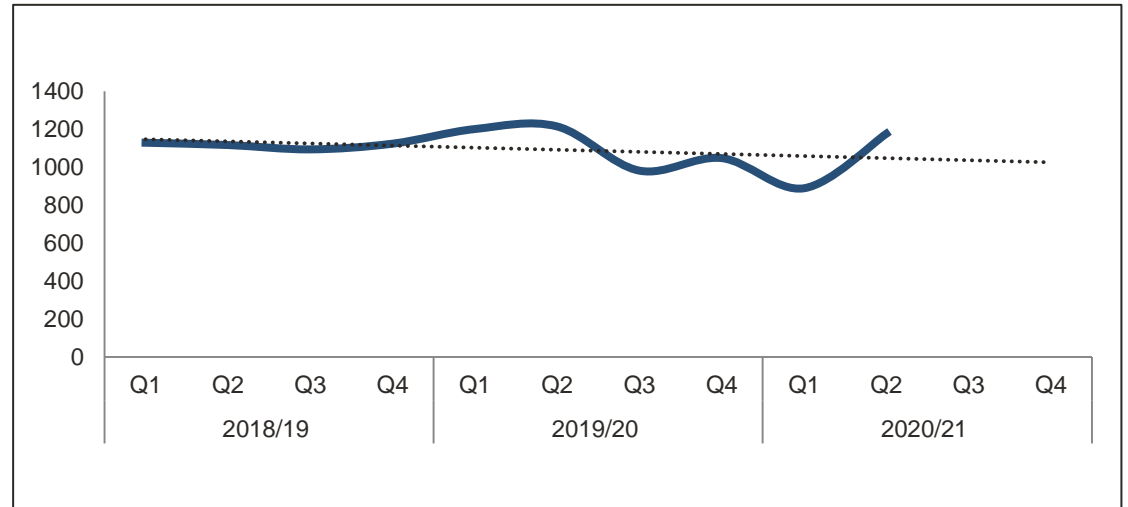
The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Worcester City district.

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.



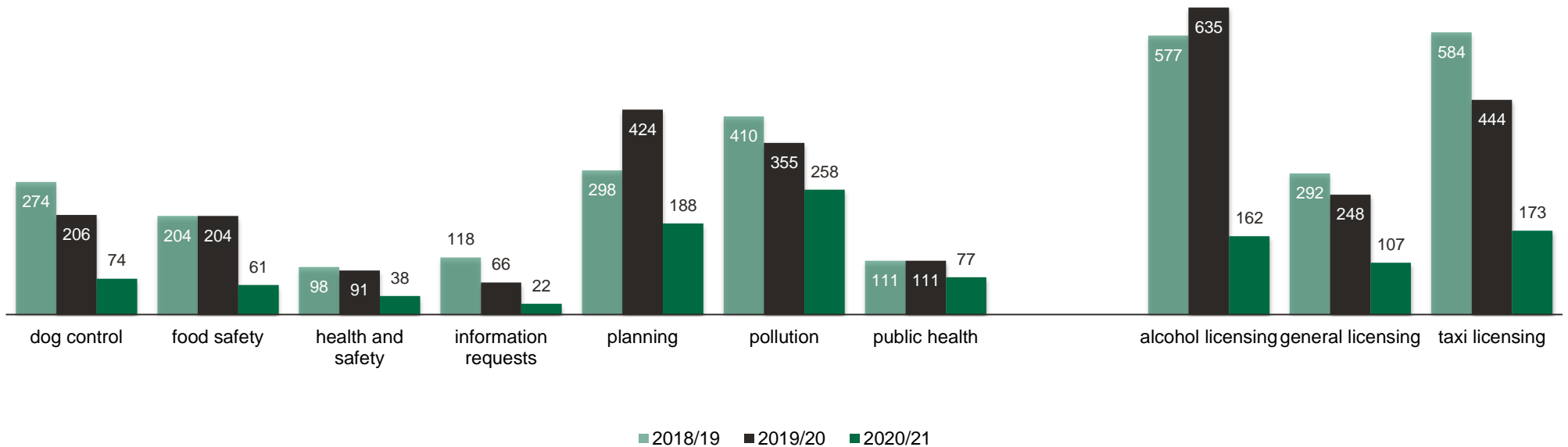
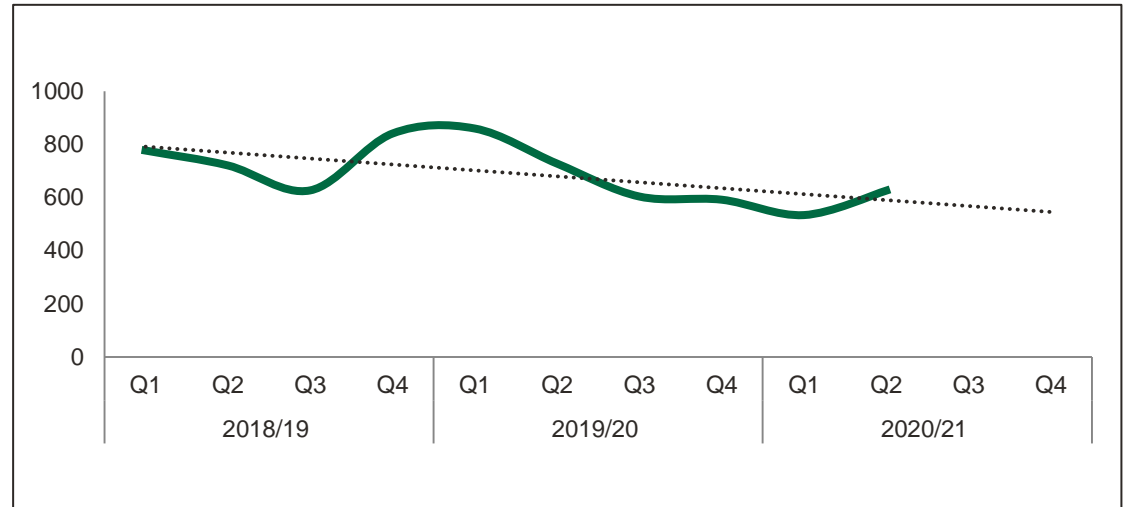
The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Wychavon district.

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.

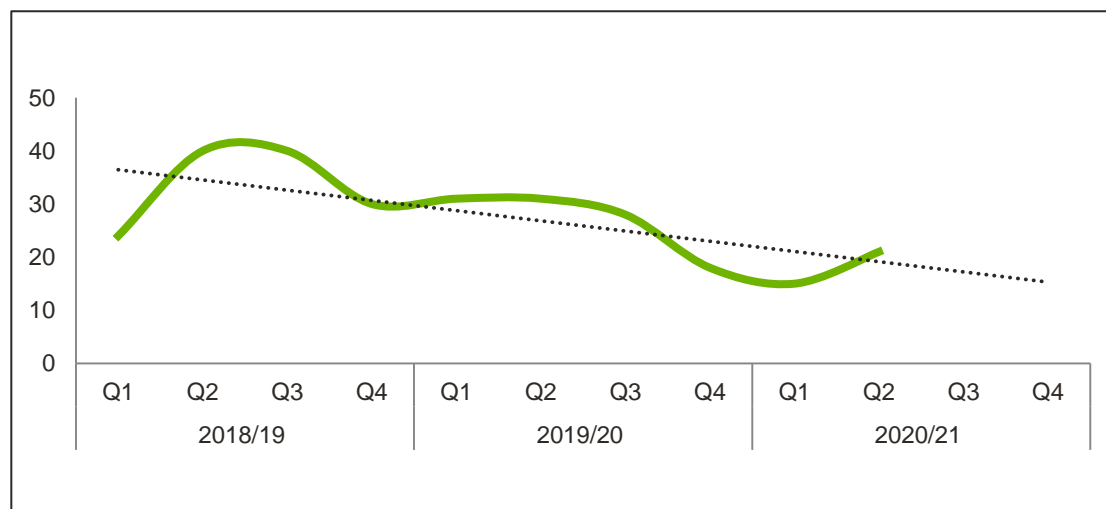


The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Wyre Forest district.

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.

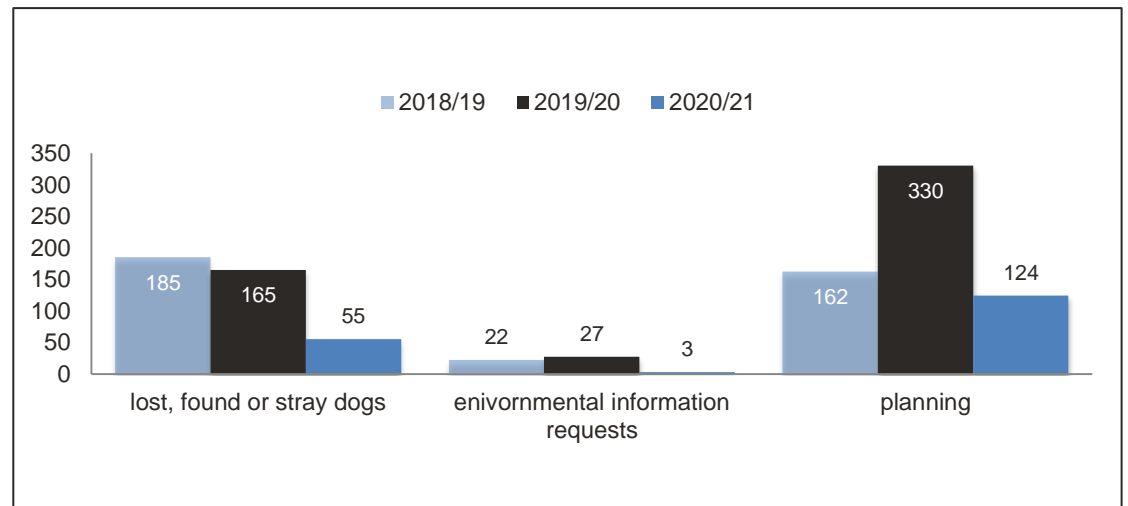
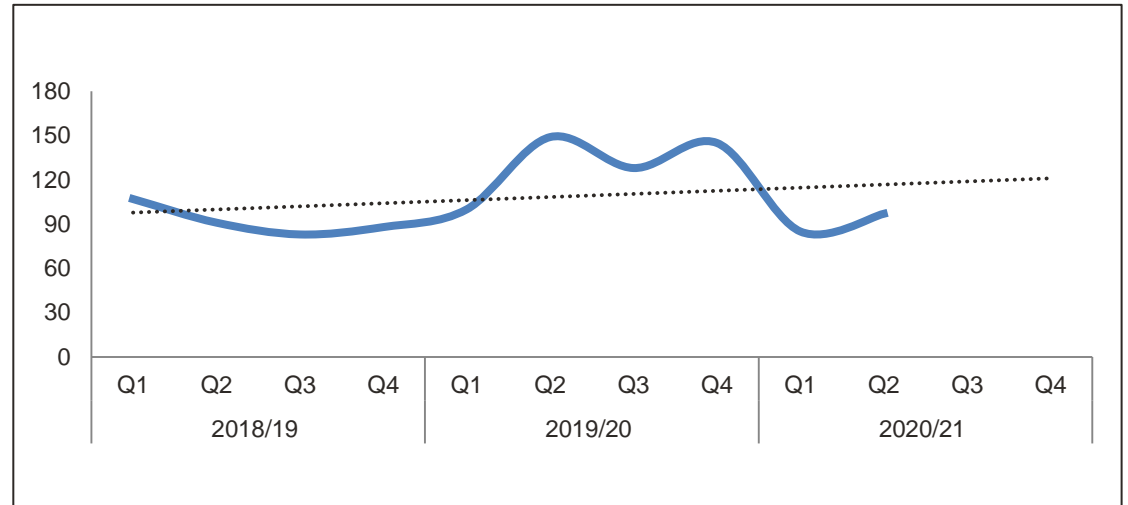


The dog control work WRS undertake for Cheltenham Borough Council is part of a three year contract with two other Gloucestershire authorities (from 2017) to deliver the collection, kennelling, returning of dogs to owners and rehoming of stray dog functions. The contract was renewed following delivery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

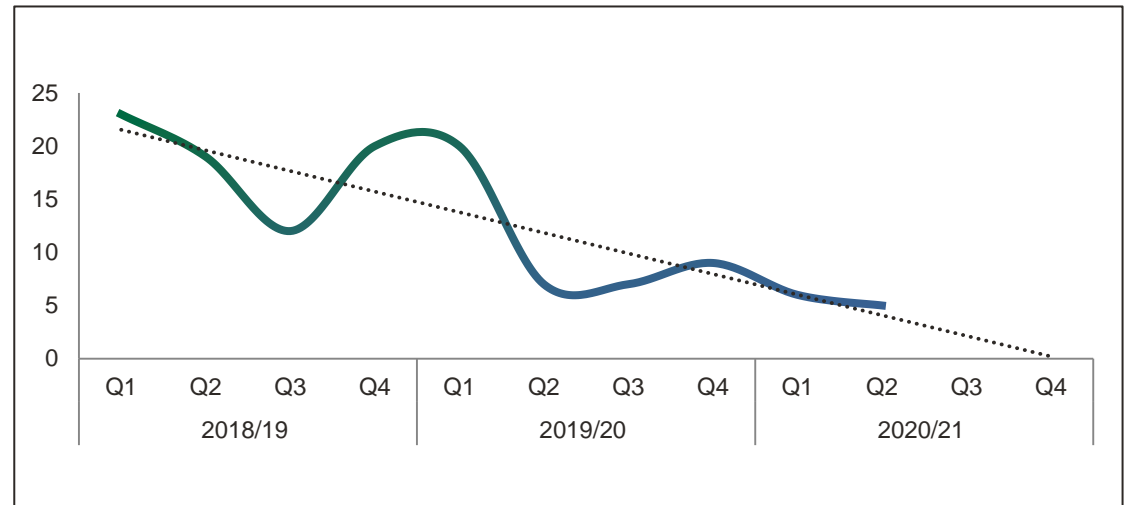


The dog control work WRS undertake for Gloucester City Council is part of a three year contract with two other Gloucestershire authorities (from 2017) to deliver the collection, kennelling, returning of dogs to owners and rehoming of stray dog functions. The contract was renewed following delivery by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

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

