

WRS Board

Date: 11th February 2021

Worcestershire Regulatory Services Service Plan 2021/22

Recommendations

That members of the Board:

- (i) Approve the WRS service plan for 2021/22
- (ii) They specifically note the level of work to be undertaken by the service this year in relation to the partners' roles as local food authorities.

Report

The Board signs off on the service plan for WRS each year. The process helps to make members aware of what the service is proposing for the relevant financial year and provides a sign off that some central government bodies like to see in relation to service delivery plans e.g. the Food Standards Agency.

The plan follows very much the pattern of previous years and has an Executive Summary to pick up the main points. Last year's plan was overtaken by events, with the response to the global pandemic. At the time of writing, the country remains in lockdown, with only a limited picture of how we will move forward. Government is clear that lockdown will be followed by a move back to a tier-based framework of controls that will stay in place for a period, whilst the vaccination programme is on-going. At the moment, the service is planning for some involvement in Covid controls for the first quarter of 2021/22 but it seems likely that could run well into quarter two as well. Flexibility will be necessary to reshape what is being delivered as the local environment changes during the first half of the financial year.

Away from the pandemic, the service will continue to shape its work around the long-standing strategic priorities for local authority regulatory services provided by BEIS, as these provide a framework that allows WRS to have a golden thread back to the priorities of the six partners and also to link to the

requirements of the various national bodies that oversee our work.

A range of high level activities are identified within the plan so that members will be aware of the general focus of activity. Below this will sit a number of team plans that will be used to drive the actual business activities.

The plan has been devised in the face of on-going financial uncertainty in local government generally. Working with businesses and other partners is a key theme for both generating income to mitigate financial risk but also to ensure that outcomes are delivered that match the priorities of partners and stakeholders.

Delivery for other local authorities remains a key income generation strategy, supported by work for the private sector and specific grant monies. Whilst much of our work for customers fell off during the initial period of the pandemic response, most of our long-standing customers have come back to us. This year will see us re-tendering for the dog control contract with the district councils in the north of Gloucestershire. We hope to continue to deliver these services.

Following consultation with Board members, the performance indicators suite generated for 2017/18 are retained to give continued comparability of performance across the years. We will continue to use intelligence to drive the business forward and the embedding of this approach and its associated processes will continue.

The Risk Register has been updated to reflect the current position in areas like IT provision and development, staffing levels, and our reliance on contractual relationships for income. Our long-standing investment in mobile and flexible working found us well-placed to deal with the need for home working and the majority of our activities are now enabled for this working pattern. We will look at our wider needs for office space as part of this year's planned review of hosting costs.

As with previous years, members are asked to pay particular attention to the provisions for food hygiene delivery in the coming year. This is to meet one of the recommendations of the auditors from the Food Standards Agency who visited the service in May 2017. They were keen that members have a better understanding of the demand in this service area when they authorised the plan for this and future years.

Members are asked to note the proposed numbers of inspections and similar activities proposed for the new financial year that will be undertaken to discharge the

statutory duties of the 6 partners in relation to food control. This year will be different from previous years due to the impact of pandemic controls. The Agency has already decided that its moratorium on the normal inspection programme will remain in place until at least 30th June 2021. Having now had this in place for over a year will mean that there is a significant backlog of food related activity that would otherwise have been delivered. We are unclear at this stage as to what the Agency's expectations will be in relation to these businesses, whether the visit programme will simply be re-scheduled or whether some investment in resource to catch-up will be required. We will report further to the Board once the picture becomes clearer.

Financial Implications

None

Sustainability

NA

Contact Points

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Background Papers

Service Plan 2020/21 including Risk Register
