

Worcestershire
Regulatory Services

Supporting and protecting you

Activity Report | 2020-21



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Foreword

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

The third quarter of the year was again dominated by Covid 19 related activity and officers had to get to grips with transitions between a number of different control arrangements, from re-opening to mini-lockdown to the tier system and then from Tier 2 to Tier 3 and now back to another November-style lockdown. As ever, there remained a significant volume of our normal day-to-day work to do, creating further pressures that the service had to bare.

The pattern of dog control complaints fell from a peak in Q2 back towards the normal levels and stray dog numbers still followed the historical downward trajectory. Food complaints maintained more normal levels as food businesses remained open to the public, albeit with more controls and, in some cases, limitations on hours of operation. Proactive food visits remained low as the FSA continues to put a hold on the usual inspection programme. This has now been extended to the end of June 2021. Health and Safety complaints and enquiries returned to more normal levels, however, accident reports increased, most likely due to reports of workplace Covid 19 transmission.

Number of Licensing complaints and enquiries returned to the normal trajectory line by the end of Q3 and numbers of applications were tracking slightly above the trajectory line, although not by a significant amount.

Requests for planning support remained up in Q3, continuing to follow the upward trajectory previously established. Environmental Information and similar requests also continued to rise during the quarter.

Nuisance and public health complaints show their usual Autumn decrease from very high levels during the Summer, with noise complaints for the period being virtually the same as the equivalent period the previous year. If the usual pattern follows and particularly with lockdown, numbers should increase during quarter 4. Although it does not show up in the granularity of the figures, there was a spike in domestic nuisance issues during the November lockdown. This is likely to be for reasons previously explained.

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

COVID-19

The CEH team of four officers, dedicated to supporting Worcestershire Public Health with investigations in workplaces, dealt with 190 service requests from the LORT (Local Outbreak Response Team). These involved a wide range of premises from the hospitality sector seeking advice about good practice, the Tier system and November lockdown to complaints about lack of adequate Covid controls. We also investigated links to outbreaks across a whole range of business settings. During September, October and November positive cases reported tended to be low numbers but as we moved into December we started to receive reports of multiple numbers affected. In early December, we sent out information to all our registered 'wet bars' advising them of Covid controls required and how they needed to comply with food law now they were required to offer a 'substantial meal' with alcohol service. As the Board will be aware, many struggled to comply with this requirement leading to much negative publicity.

Officers continue to interpret the ever-changing legislation and guidance in order to support businesses to operate in a COVID secure manner. Advice has been well received and the business sectors affected by closure or significant adaptations to their operating models have in the vast majority of cases acted positively and appropriately to achieve compliance. Where businesses have failed to comply with the legislation, officers have issued prohibition notices. Challenges from traders and their solicitors have been forthcoming but in each case the service has maintained a robust position to protect the public health.

Food Safety

We continue to receive new Food Premises Registrations. In our third quarter, 215 new businesses registered; the majority being small home enterprises although we also continue to receive new high street applicants. In accordance with FSA guidance we are not carrying out routine food visits other than where we have identified there to be a major public health risk either from previous history, a complaint or through our intel systems. We also assess risk by sending a questionnaire to all new businesses to help us identify type of food being produced. This system also continues to be used for maintaining contact with our very low risk businesses and we continue to receive a good response to questionnaires. In many cases we are able to give a business a hygiene rating from the information provided, in others we will verify information by phone or a visit. We have continued to carry out remote inspections of some premises but the demand on resources from Covid work has limited this work. In December we were able to recruit the equivalent of one FTE to solely concentrate on food work going forward.

Food officers also spent time working with NeoKare Nutrition (Redditch) a new food factory producing processed human baby milk. The company, who have a factory in India, were recommended to the county by the FSA/DTI. It is the first private business of this type to operate in the UK and has been a learning curve for all parties. Their long term plan is to export the produce throughout Europe.

In December we welcomed two new Primary Authorities – Alimenti (Malvern) a small food consultancy and Mindful Chef (Redditch) a web based healthy meals provider who have trebled their business in the past year. Our Food Lead also became heavily involved in Brexit preparations for food businesses attending various webinars and having to deal with a constantly changing landscape of information.

Nuisance

Whilst demand for nuisance investigations usually falls significantly during Q3, this year we experienced a further spike in demand, believed to be due to lockdown leading to more people working from home where they are then noticing a variety of issues including noise, smoke from bonfires and from log-burners, and light nuisance from security lighting and in one case from a large animated advertising display screen. Lockdown appears also to have led to reduced tolerance of some unavoidable noise sources such as construction site noise, even where this is taking place during normal daytime working hours. We have also seen significant numbers of complaints about rodent activity, possibly exacerbated by the relatively mild weather conditions during Q3.

An appeal against an abatement notice relating to noise from a large distribution centre was lodged, and we have prepared a case for the appeal hearing, however the company appears to have decided to take steps instead to comply with the notice, and has employed an acoustic consultant to assist them with this with whom our officers are working to achieve a resolution. The legal process is currently on hold pending the outcome of the works, and we are optimistic that a satisfactory noise reduction can be achieved by the measures proposed.

Two prosecution files in relation to noise from barking dogs are awaiting trial dates – the first has been adjourned a number of times already due to large backlogs of cases in the courts due to covid-19 restricting courts ability to deal with cases.

A number of notices have been served during the period in relation to such diverse issues as noise nuisance, accumulations of waste causing pest problems, light nuisance and inadequate drainage systems

Health and Safety

Two lengthy and complex investigations were concluded in Q3 with prosecution files being submitted to the relevant partner legal teams. These relate to serious injuries sustained at a workplace and a fatality in connection with leisure activities.

An investigation into a serious accident at a hotel in Droitwich was concluded by the company accepting a Simple Caution. This is an admission of guilt which is placed on record and may be considered by a Court in the event of any future contraventions.

Regulated premises across the County have been contacted with guidance regarding the controlling of crowds being issues in relation to COVID security.

Licensing

The quarter commenced with the majority of licensed premises being able to open including those that required personal licenses as the relaxation of restrictions in quarter two followed through into quarter three.

Many district buildings re-opened allowing licensing appointments to commence allowing new driver applications and knowledge and skills test to also re-commence even though be it was only for a short time as in November we were plunged into tier restrictions which meant some of these duties once again had to be parked.

Work commenced on the Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards that were introduced by the DFT earlier this year and reports were circulated to all committees where appropriate and the WRS Board. Whilst the focus of these standards is on protecting children and vulnerable adults, all passengers will benefit from the recommendations, which aim to better regulate the taxi and PHV sector.

In October, there was a national Scrap Metal week of action and on Thursday 15th October the team supported the Police, environment agency, VOSA and the civil enforcement team at Wyre Forest District Council to help out with a day of action. Roadside checks for collectors and visits to known scrap metal sites were undertaken. Encouragingly there were no significant issues found and good links were made with a number of agencies for future work and investigations.

The Licensing team launched a intelligence operation looking at illegal puppy breeding and are using a intelligence based approach engaging with a number of other departments and agencies to look pragmatically at illegal puppy complaints including illegal breeding, noise and the illegal selling of puppies.

Throughout quarter three licensing officers have been supporting Community Environmental Health colleagues and West Mercia Police with the night time economy enforcement response as part of the WRS workstream specifically focusing on licensed premises and will continue to do so whilst COVID-19 restrictions remain in place.

Technical Services

Dog Control

The third quarter was fairly consistent with the second quarter, with the service having received vcontact in relation to 325 dog related matters; including enquiries for assistance or advice and complaints. Of the 306 dogs that were reported lost or found, 23 were lost and an additional 5 were reported as being loose. We were successful in reuniting 152 dogs with their owners, and rehoming 28 with recognised animal rehoming charities. In addition to this a number of press releases were issued in relation to warning potential new owners to take care when looking to buy a new dog from private sellers.

Air Quality

Air Quality monitoring work resumed in July and has now been fully established nevertheless, it is expected that the data collected for 2020-21 will not be representative of a normal year due to the lockdowns experienced to date. Road traffic statistics provided by the County Council confirm that traffic levels are consistency below average declining from 80% down to 60% between November and the end of 2021. On a more positive note, officers have been able to re-commission a gas analyser in Kidderminster which provides continuous accurate data for urban NO2 emissions. The data collected from this unit can be observed in real time and downloaded from;

https://ukairquality.net/Dashboard/Index_?dashboardName=Dashboard_2&id=284&stationInfoConfigKey=stationinfolpage&DeviceType=desktop&FromAdmin=false&showHiddenElements=false&isPopup=false

<https://www.ukairquality.net/home/map>

The data will be used to provide unofficial monthly corrected data for diffusion tube analyses that takes place in other parts of the County that previously was only available as annual averages and provided retrospectively at the end of April the following year.

Officers have also completed a detailed air quality model for Comberton Road in Kidderminster and will be consulting the Council on the outcomes of this work in Q4.

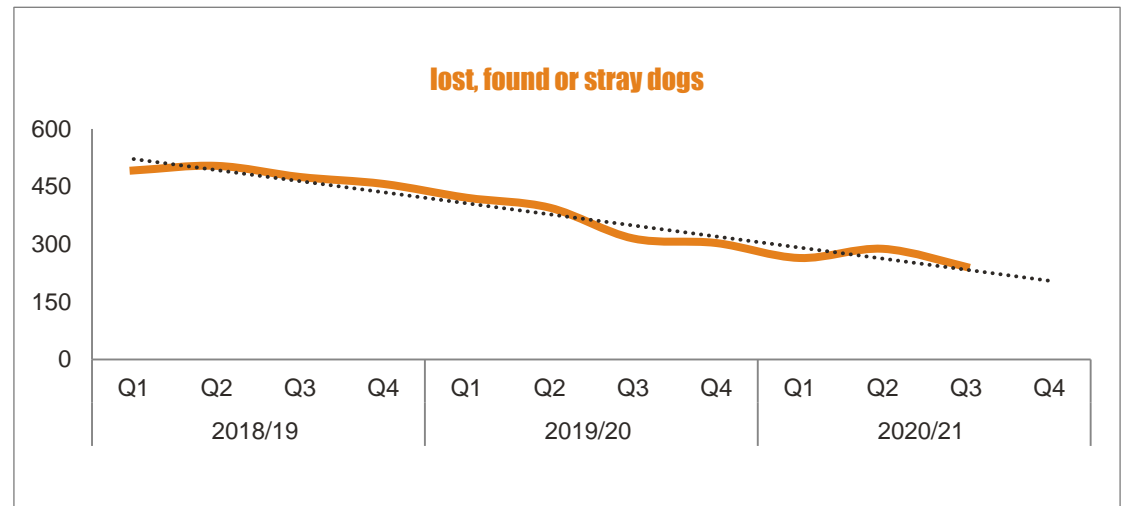
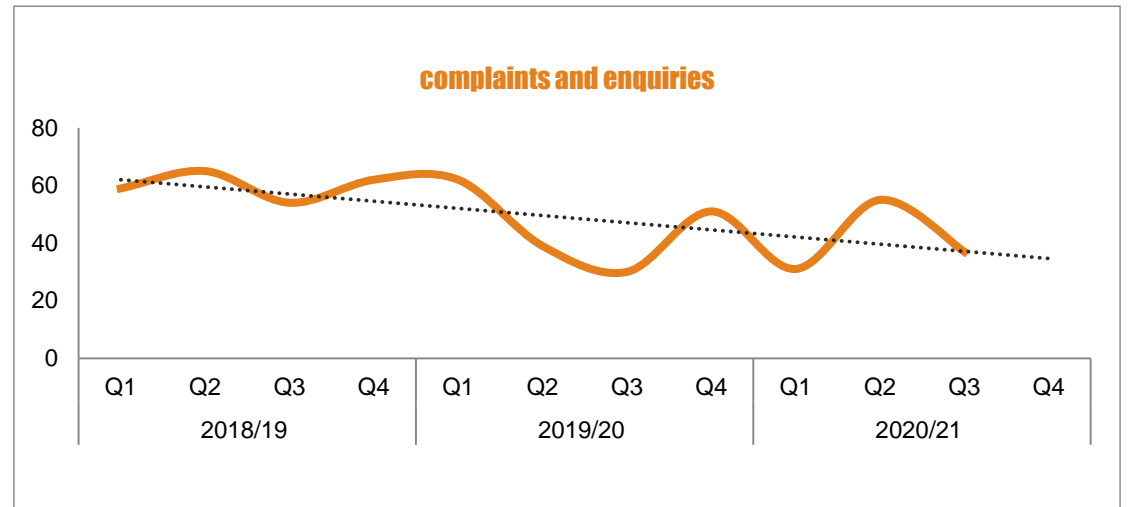
Contaminated Land

Along with Legal Services at Redditch Borough Council Officers have recently been reviewing the status of Part IIA contaminated land declarations at Marlpool Drive following several enquires by local residents. The joint review confirmed that the status of the determinations should remain unchanged due to the nuances associated with the method of landfill gas mitigation until further notice.

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 the previous quarter, the number of stray or lost dogs reported to WRS continues to decline. The total number of cases recorded in the year to date is a reduction of approximately 46% and 29% compared to previous years. The nature of the cases recorded remains consistent however, with 64% relating to 'contained' stray dogs. This means the dog was found and held by, for example, a member of the public. Approximately 77% of stray dogs have been returned to their owners whilst 14% have been rehomed.

In general, the service receives a low number of dog control complaints. Based on the 92 cases recorded in the year to date, 45% have related to fouling and persistent straying, whilst 43% have related to dangerous dogs.

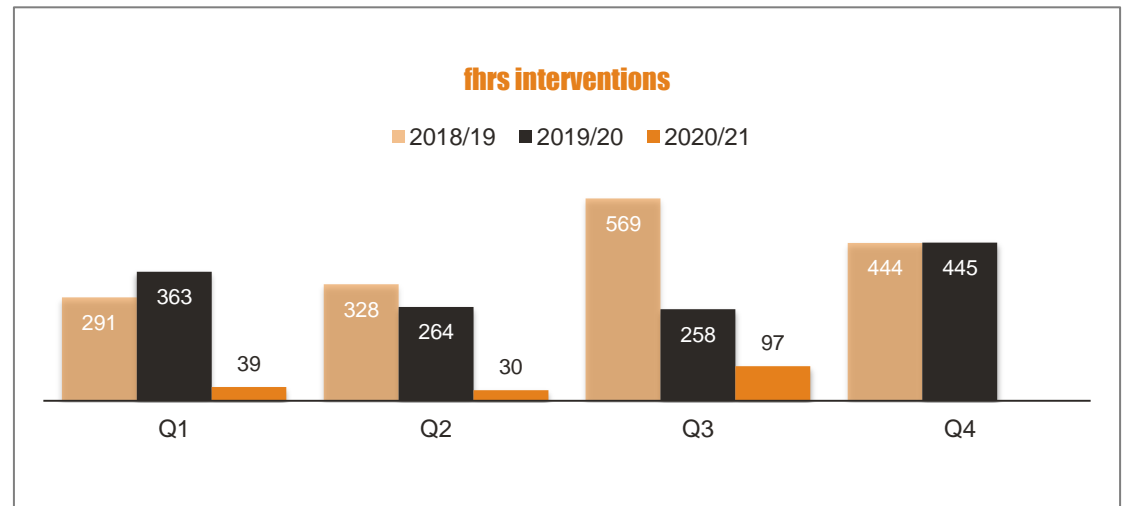
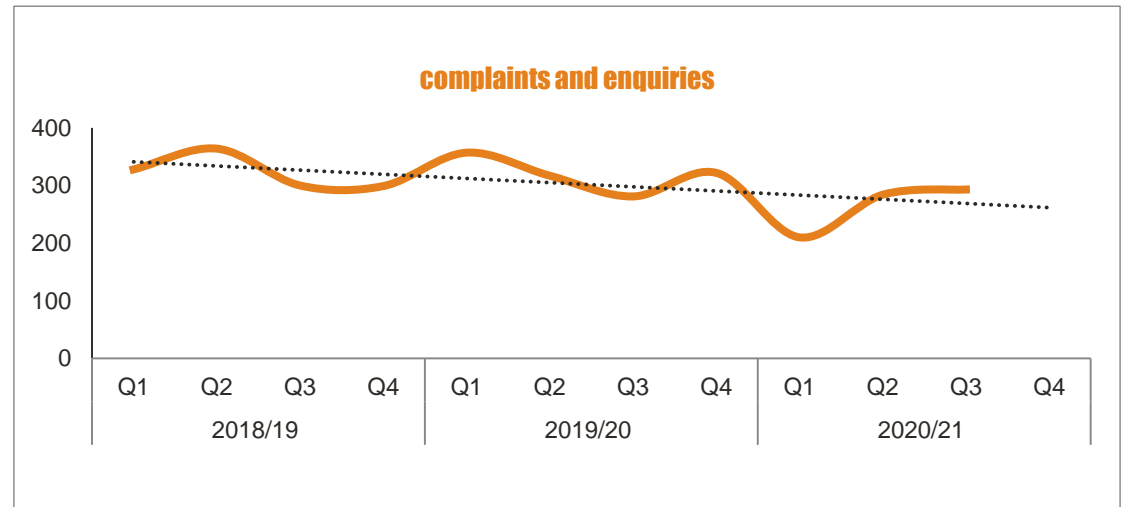


Work in this area of regulation has been hampered severely by national lockdowns and officers have been securing compliance through the application of blended inspection work (Site visit only when permissible and necessary, video conferencing and documentation audits). It is envisaged that this will continue through Q4 which provides the County with the best balance of regulation and support for business under the circumstance.

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.

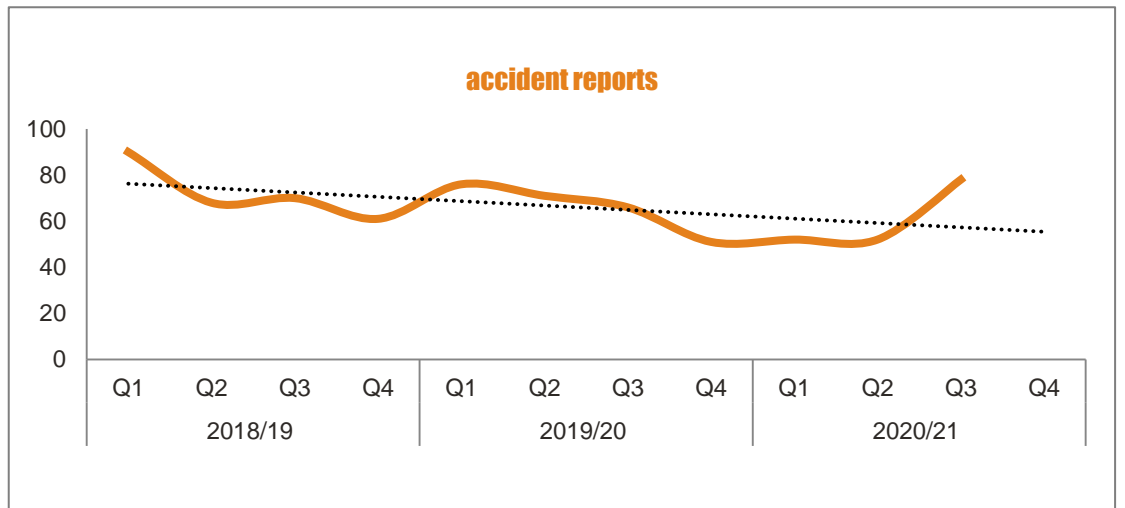
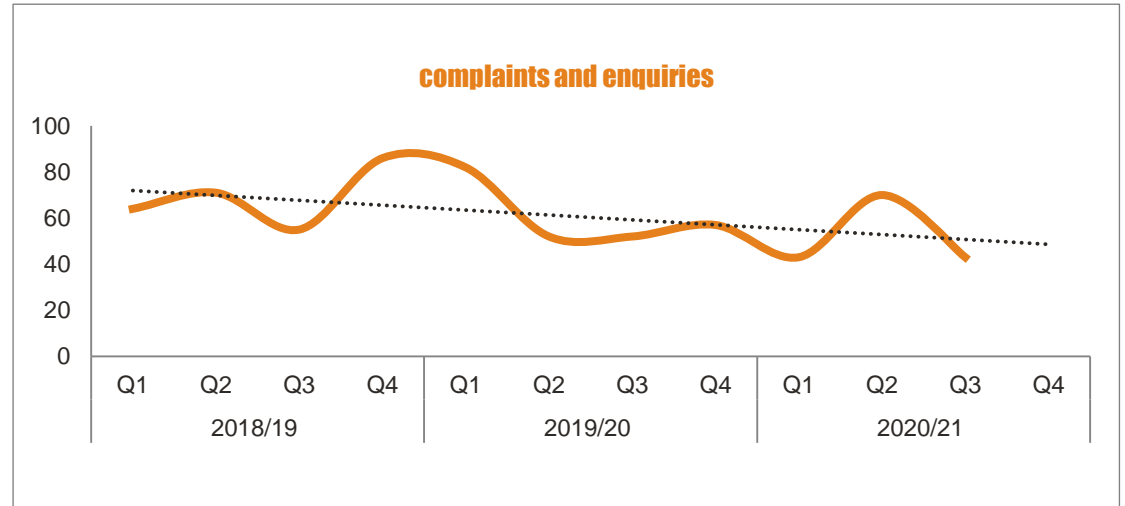
The number of food safety cases received in the year to date is a reduction of approximately 17% and 20% compared to previous years. This reduction, particularly during quarter one, coincides with the closing of the hospitality sector due to restrictions implemented as a result of COVID-19. Based on the 353 complaints received, 76% have been related to products purchased from food premises, whilst 24% have related to hygiene standards and practices.

A total of 4 interventions conducted in the year to date have resulted in a non compliant (0, 1 or 2) rating being issued. A significantly lower number of interventions have been undertaken this year however due to COVID-19 restrictions.



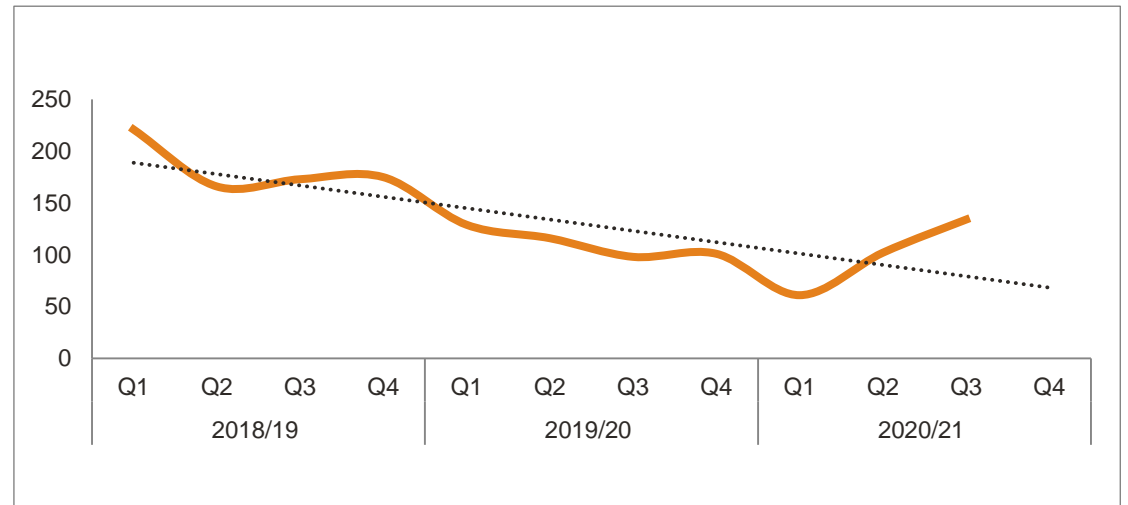
The chart (top right) shows the number of complaints and enquiries recorded by WRS over a three year period relating to health and safety at work. This includes requests for business advice. The chart (bottom right) shows the number of notifications received by WRS relating to accidents.

The number of health and safety at work cases received in the year to date is a reduction of approximately 19% and 15% compared to previous years. Approximately 53% of cases have been reports of accidents; with 37% of these reports relating to injuries where a worker is incapacitated for more than seven days. A further 28% have related to viruses and diseases; specifically positive COVID-19 tests in permise such as residential care homes.



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



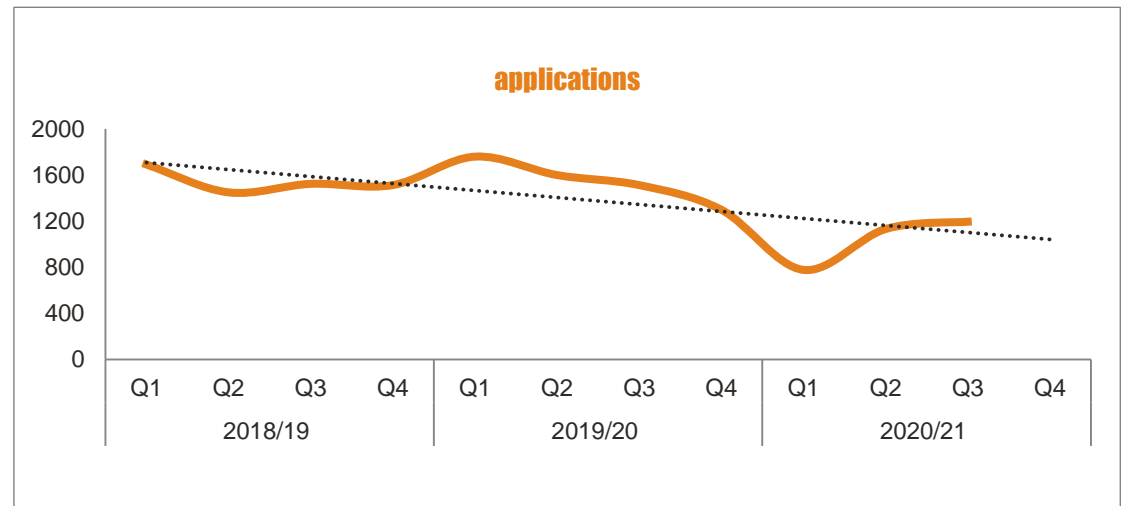
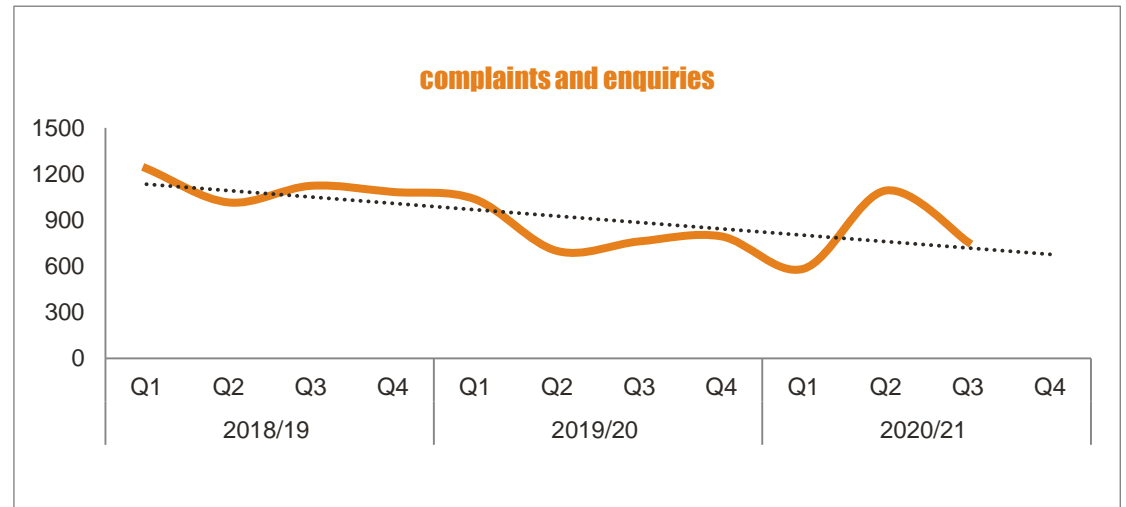
The chart (top right) shows the number of complaints and enquiries recorded by WRS over a three year period relating to licensing. The chart (bottom right) shows the number of licensing applications.

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 number of licensing cases received in the year to date is a reduction of approximately 31% and 24% compared to previous years. With the hospitality sector and night time economy significantly affected by COVID-19 restrictions however, this has led to a significant reduction in the volume of alcohol licensing applications - particularly temporary event notices. Approximately 56% of cases have been applications and registrations; with 37% of these cases relating to hackney carriage vehicles and 11% relating to premises licences.

In general terms, licensing receive a higher number of enquiries compared to complaints. Based on the 380 cases recorded in the year to date, 28% have related to taxis, 22% have related to alcohol licensing and 17% have related to animal licensing.

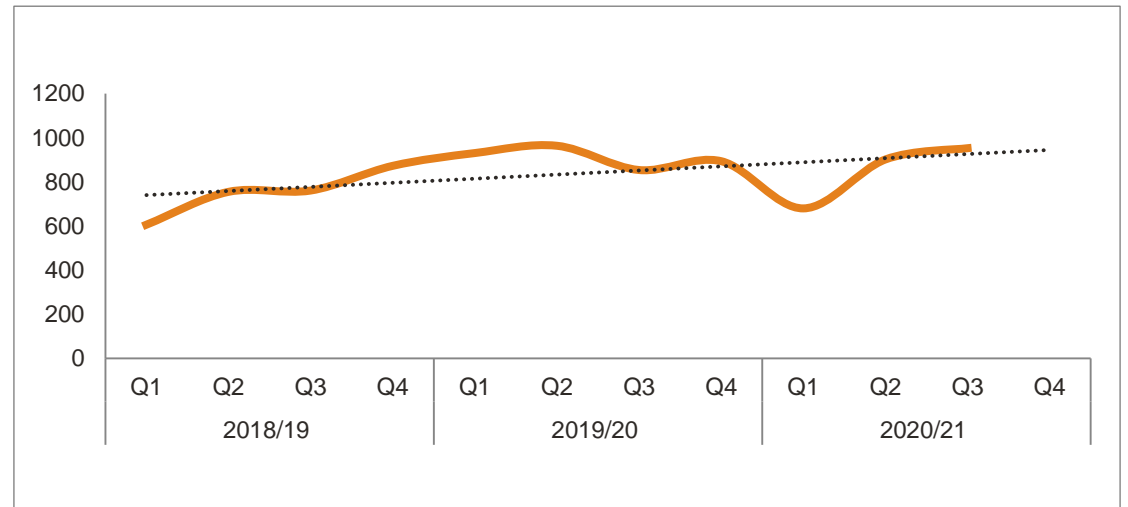


The chart (right) shows the number of planning enquiries completed by WRS over a three year period. The majority of these requests are consultations but can also include requests to discharge conditions.

Planning requests relate to the following;

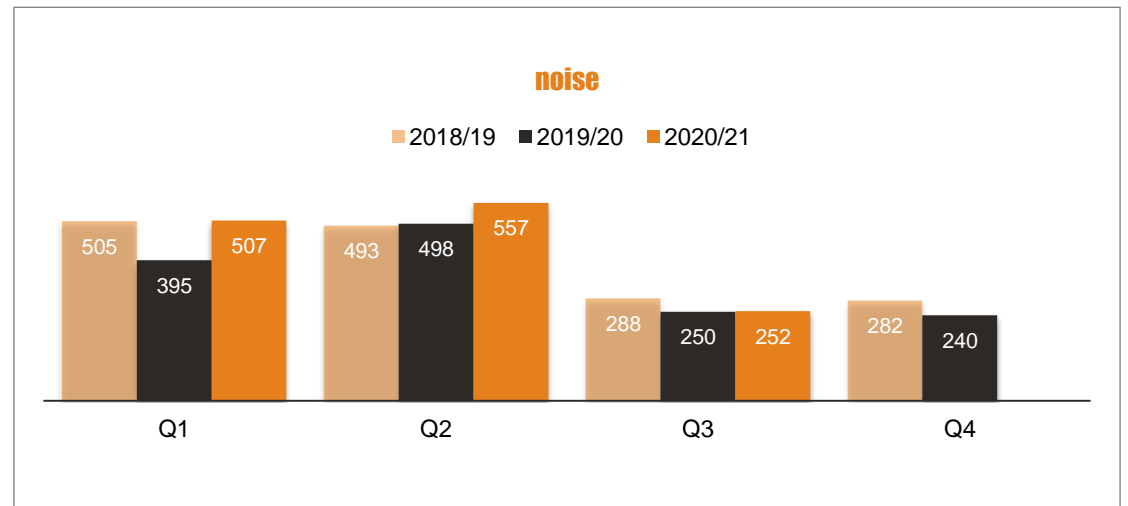
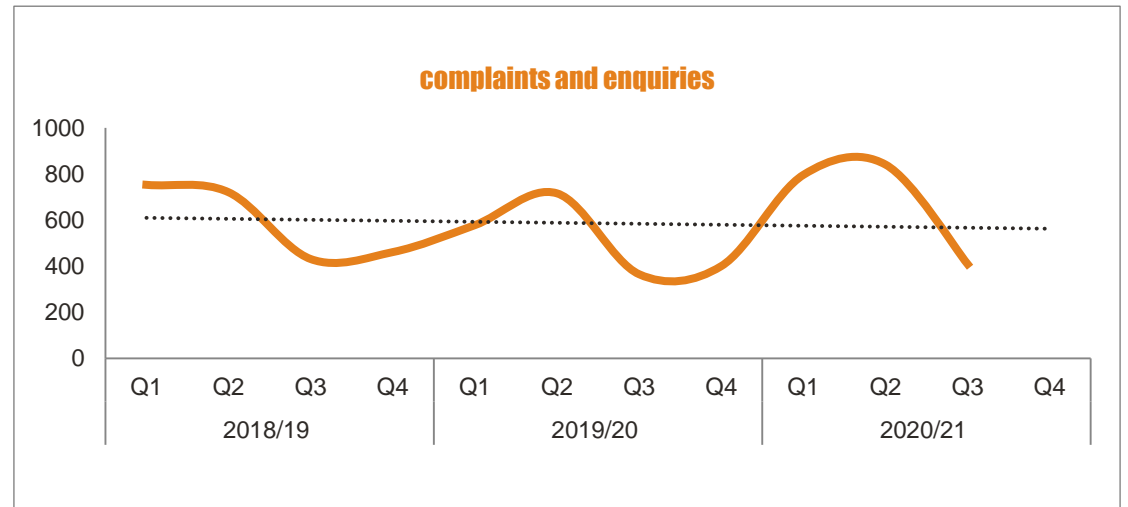
- Air Quality
- Contaminated Land
- Environmental Permitting
- Food
- Health and Safety
- Nuisance / Noise
- Private Water Supplies

The number of planning enquiries received in the year to date is an increase of 19% compared to 2018/19 but a reduction of 7% compared to 2019/20. Approximately 91% of planning enquiries have been consultations, whilst 53% have related to contaminated land. A fifth of planning enquiries are completed on a contractual basis on behalf of other local authorities.



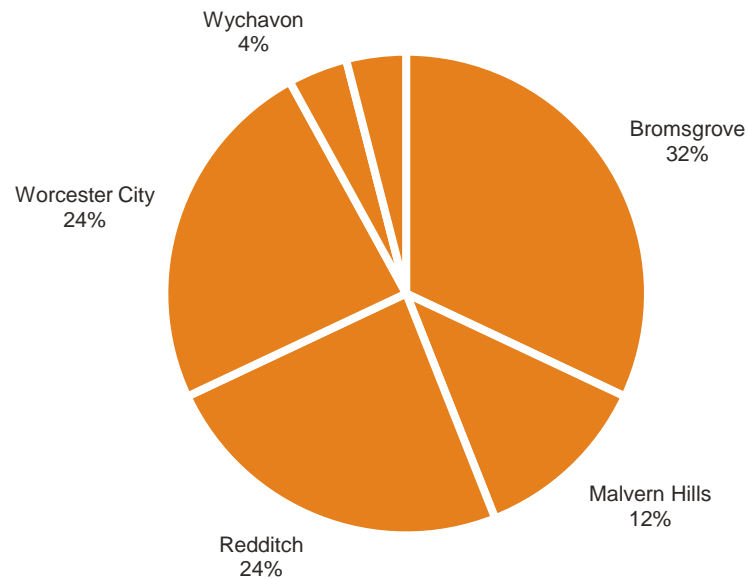
The chart (right) shows the number of complaints and enquiries recorded by WRS over a three year period relating to pollution. Types of cases recorded under this category include contamination incidents, air pollution (smoke, fumes and gases), light pollution and noise pollution. The chart (bottom right)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

The number of pollution cases received in the year to date is an increase of approximately 7% and 23% compared to previous years. Approximately 44% of cases have related to domestic noise, whilst 21% have related to smoke nuisance. A significant proportion of the latter has related to domestic bonfires. Whilst COVID-19 restrictions are a notable factor in the level of domestic nuisance, 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.

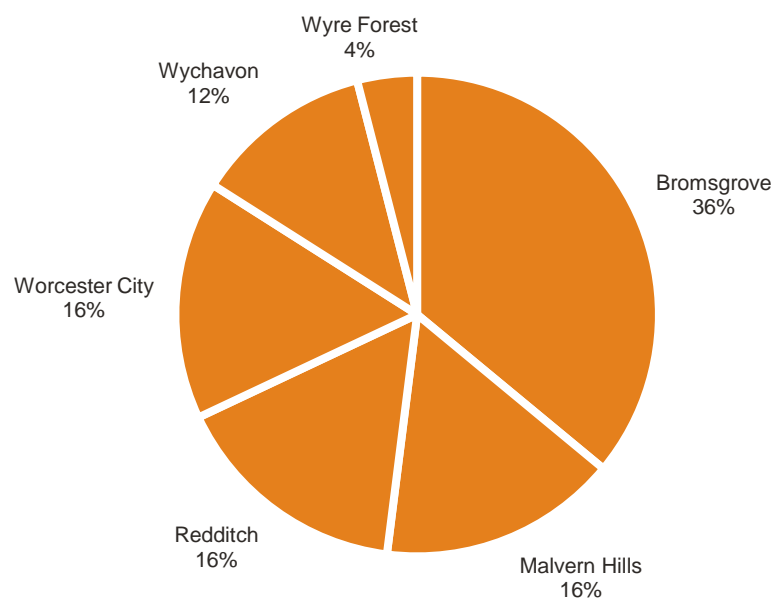
Note: Data shown on this page represents the 'year to date' and will continue to increase each quarter until the end of year report is published.



Ward	Total	Population	Rate
Wribbenhall And Arley	26	5,444	4.78
Perryfields	7	1,501	4.66
Norton	15	3,707	4.05
Avoncroft	12	3,300	3.64
Abbey	23	6,620	3.47
Lowes Hill	10	2,903	3.44
Chase	21	6,217	3.38
Rubery South	10	2,984	3.35
Sanders Park	12	3,651	3.29
Central (Redditch)	22	6,844	3.21
Warndon	18	5,669	3.18
Saint John	28	8,836	3.17
Lindridge	7	2,261	3.10
Charford	11	3,665	3.00
Crabbs Cross	16	5,647	2.83
Bedwardine	23	8,167	2.82
Winyates	23	8,184	2.81
Lodge Park	15	5,591	2.68
Link	17	6,438	2.64
Gorse Hill	15	5,839	2.57
Cathedral	30	11,763	2.55
Hill Top	6	2,382	2.52
Church Hill	20	8,062	2.48
Claines	20	8,076	2.48
Evesham South	13	5,423	2.40

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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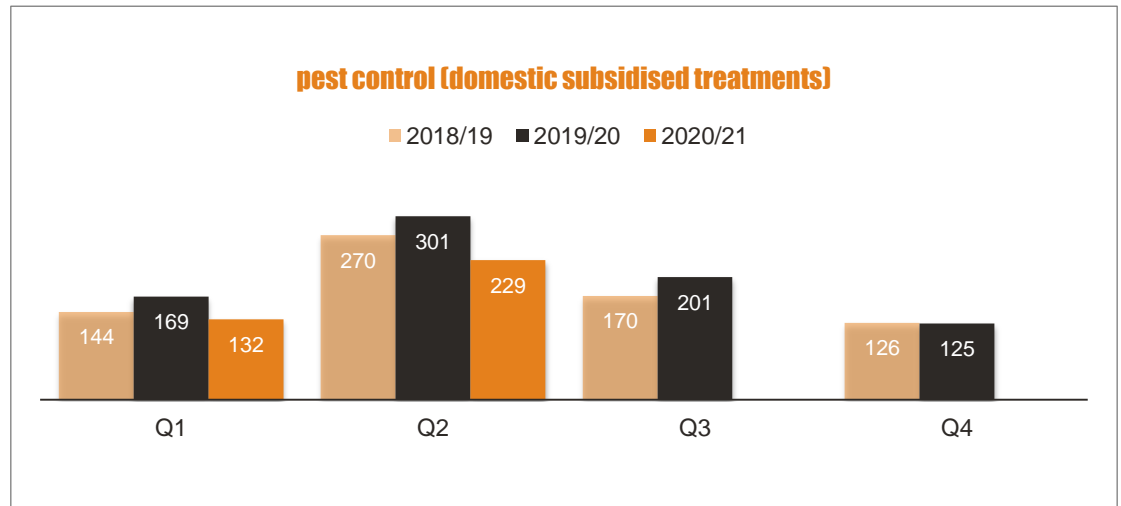
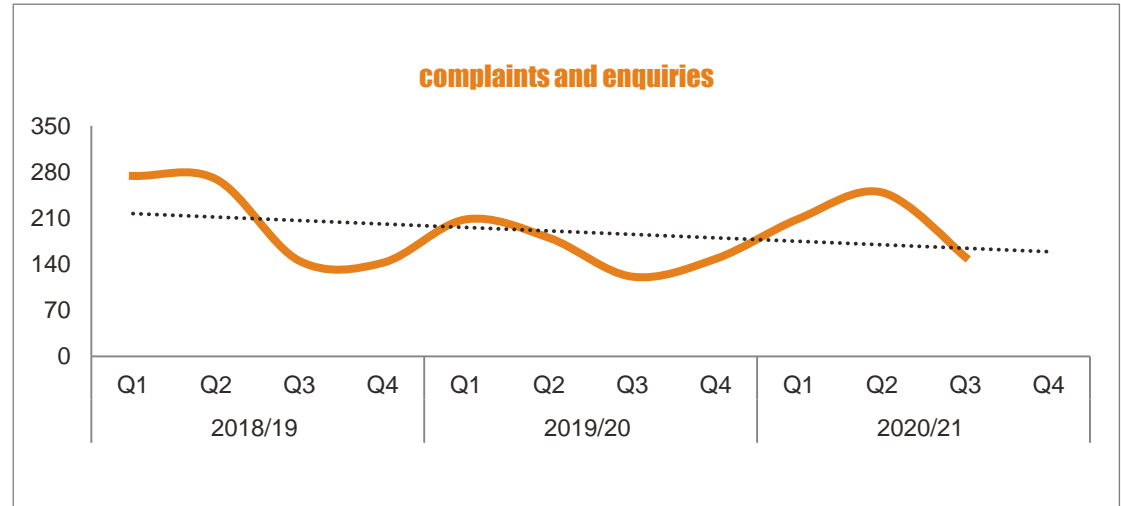


Ward	Total	Population	Rate
Droitwich Central	13	2,570	5.06
Cathedral	54	11,488	4.70
Upton And Hanley	18	4,153	4.33
Rainbow Hill	23	5,525	4.16
Lowes Hill	12	2,888	4.16
Charford	15	3,670	4.09
Charford	15	3,670	4.09
Catshill North	11	2,818	3.90
Offmore And Comberton	35	9,726	3.60
Barnt Green And Hopwood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

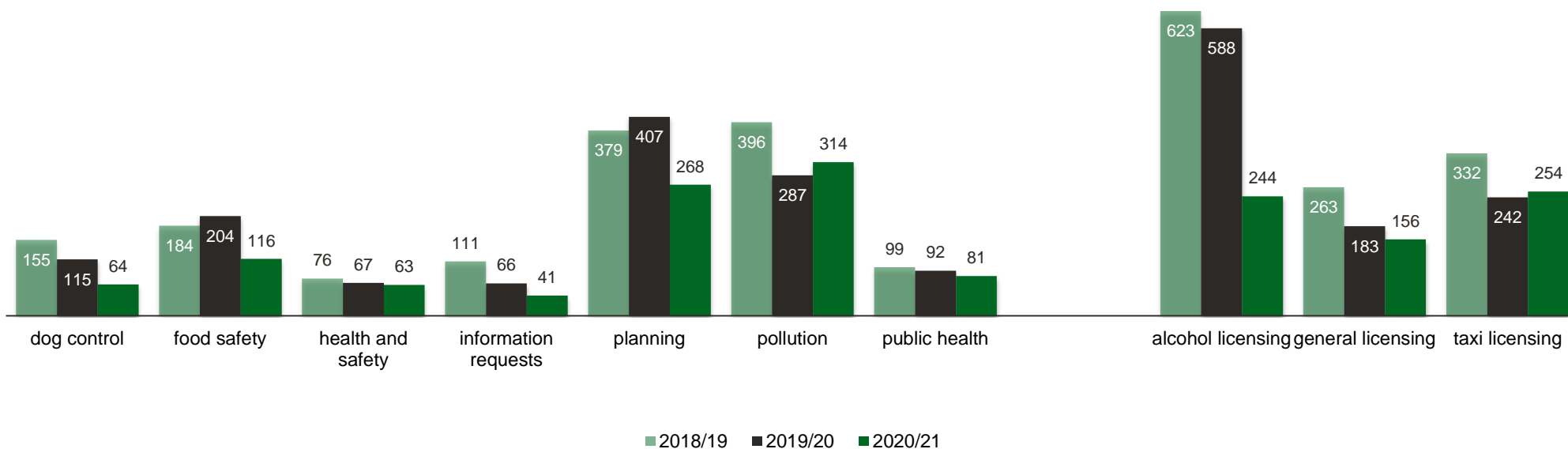
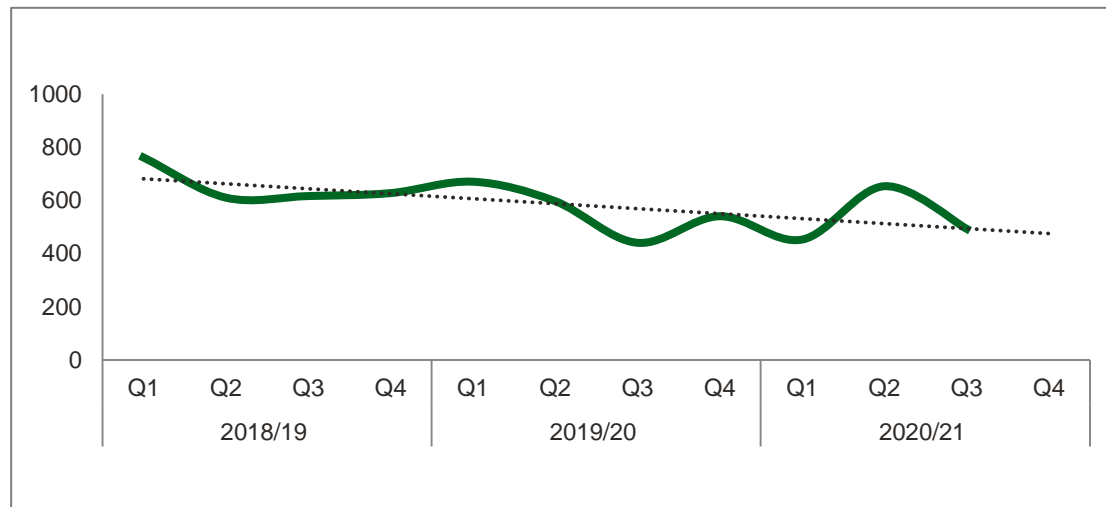
The number of public health cases received in the year to date is a reduction of approximately 11% compared to 2018/19, but an increase of 19% compared to 2019/20. Approximately 64% of cases have related to pest control; whether enquiries about treatments or sewer baiting, or complaints about pest control 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 154 domestic treatments undertaken during quarter three, 66% were due to the presence of rats, whilst 44% were in relation to properties located in the Wychavon district.



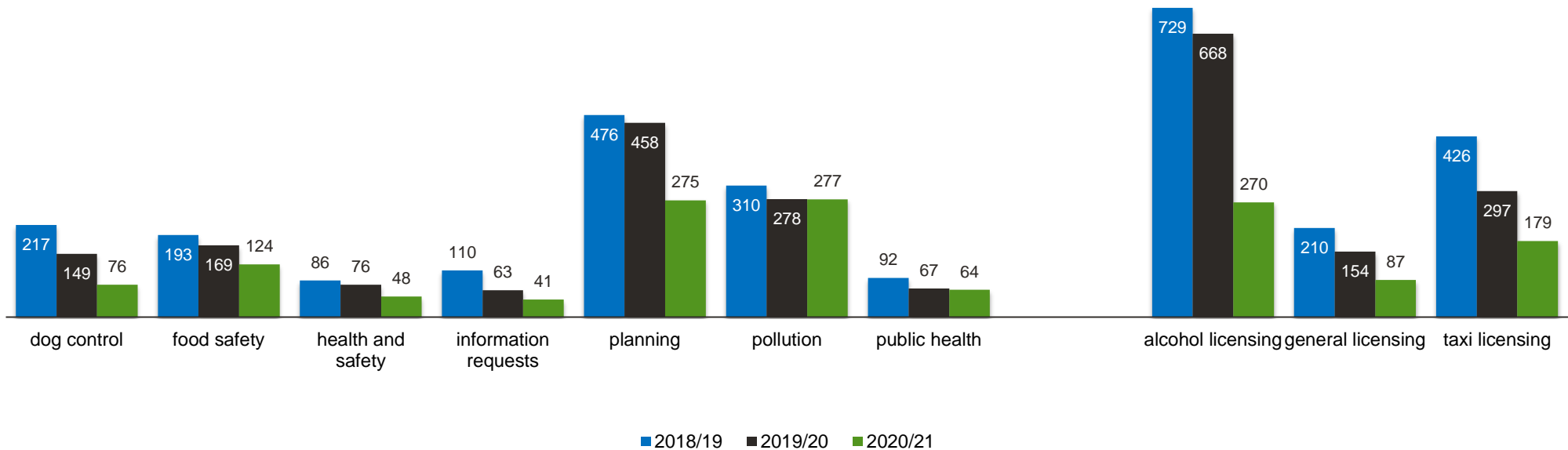
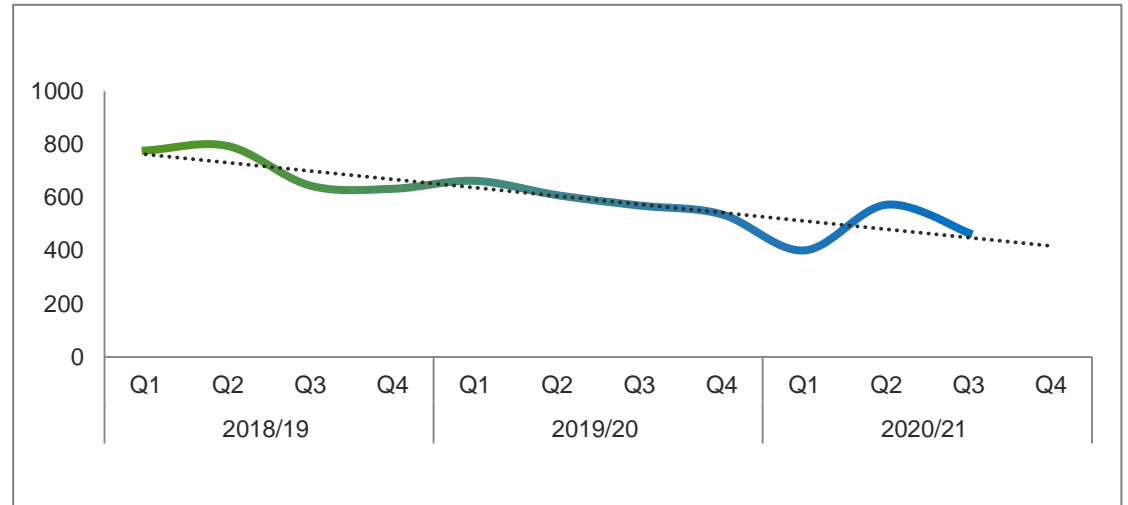
The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Bromsgrove district.

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.



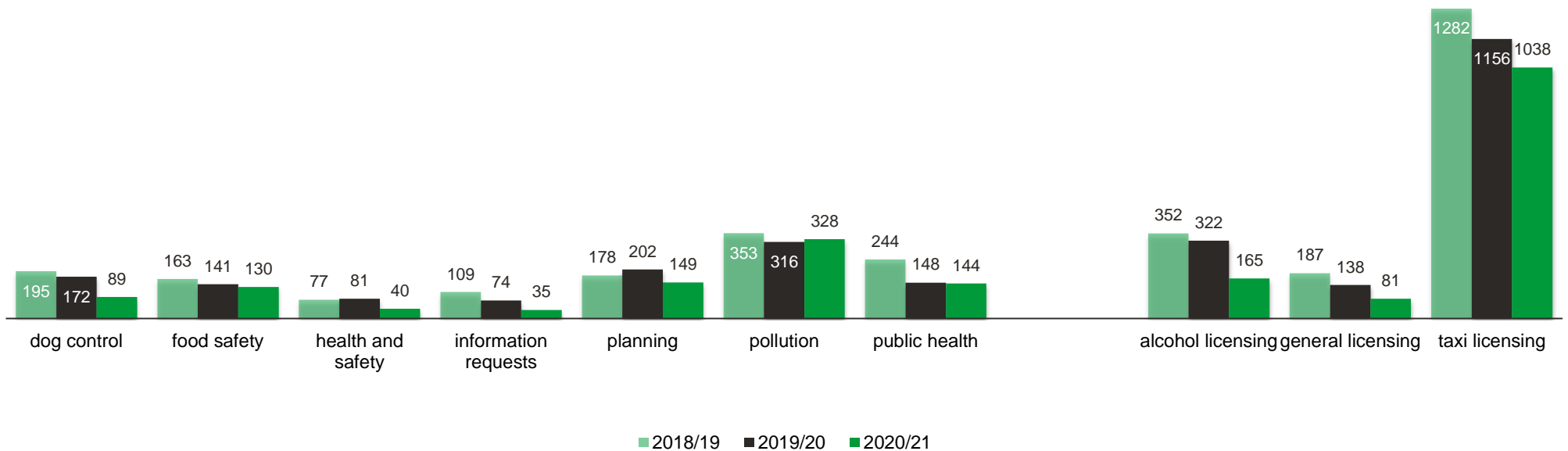
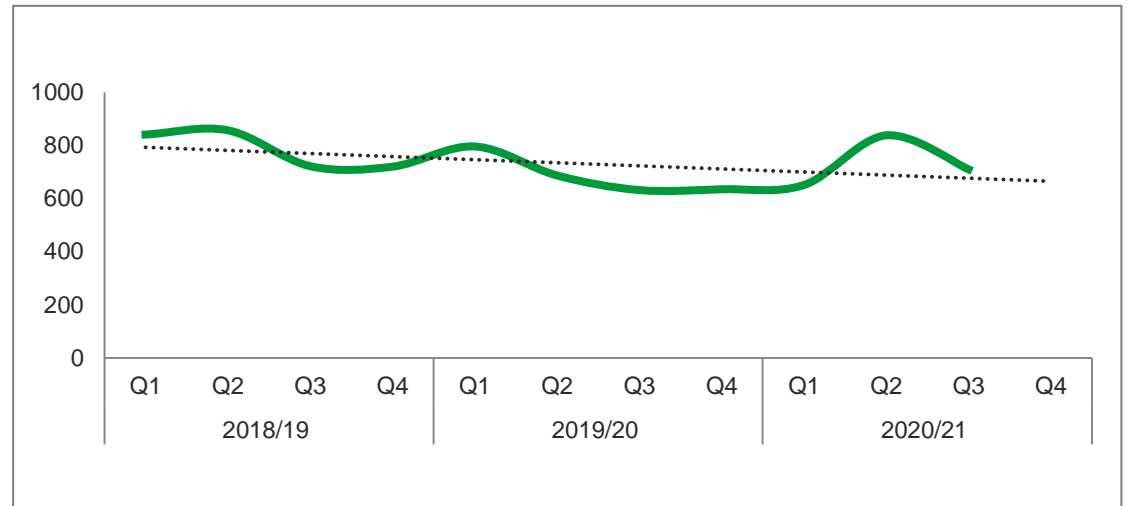
The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Malvern Hills district.

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.



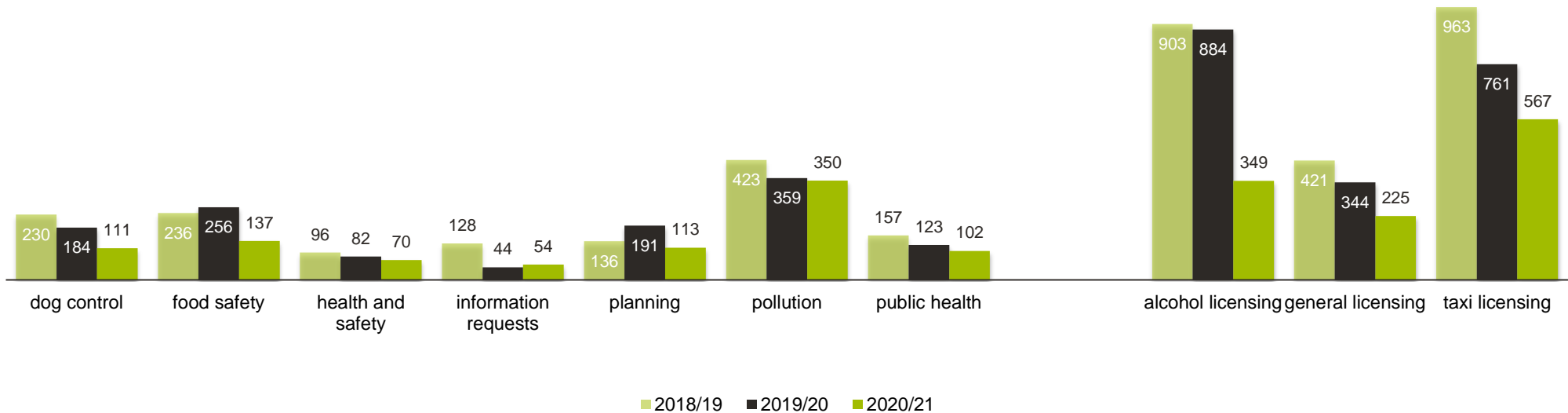
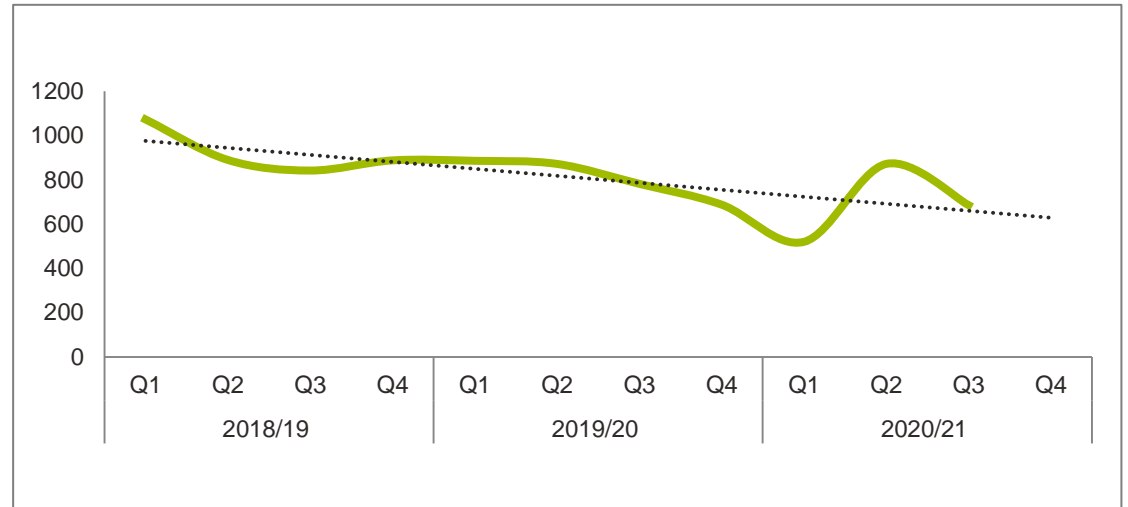
The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Redditch district.

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.



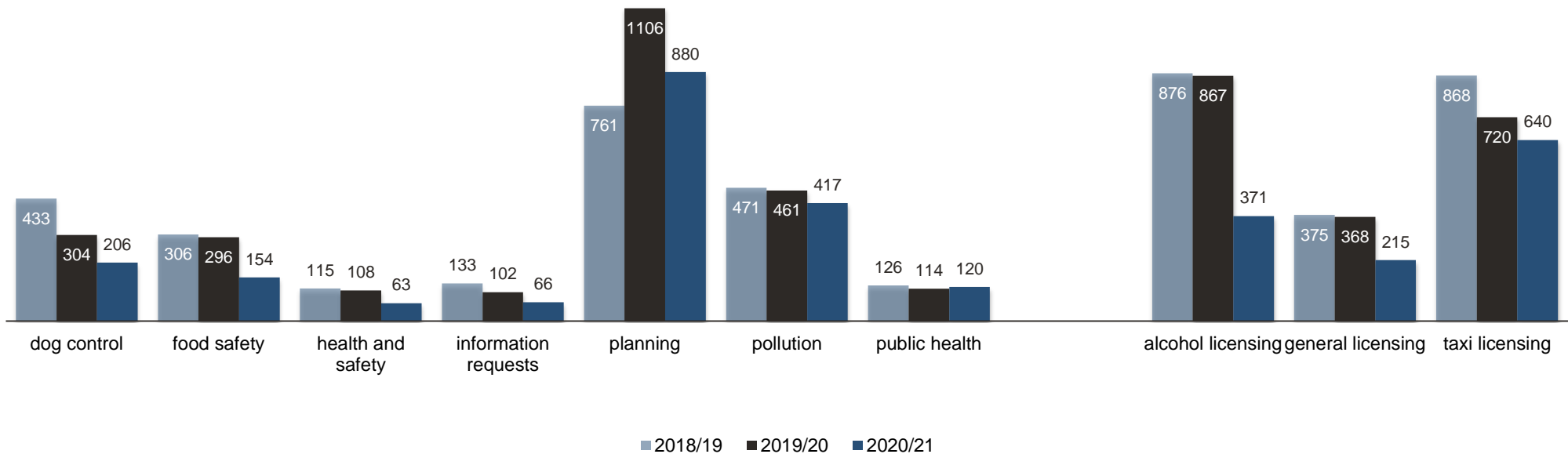
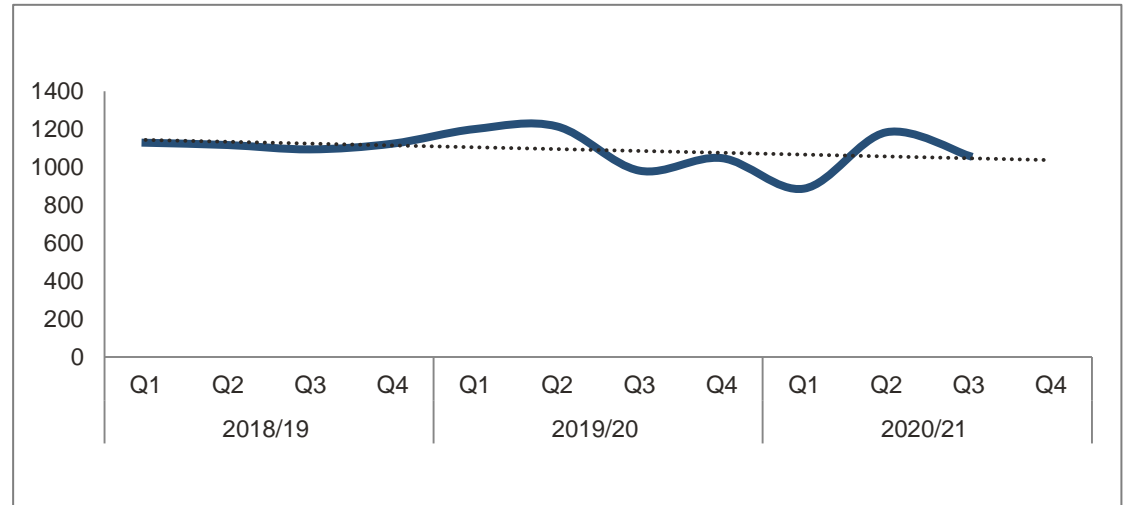
The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Worcester City district.

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.



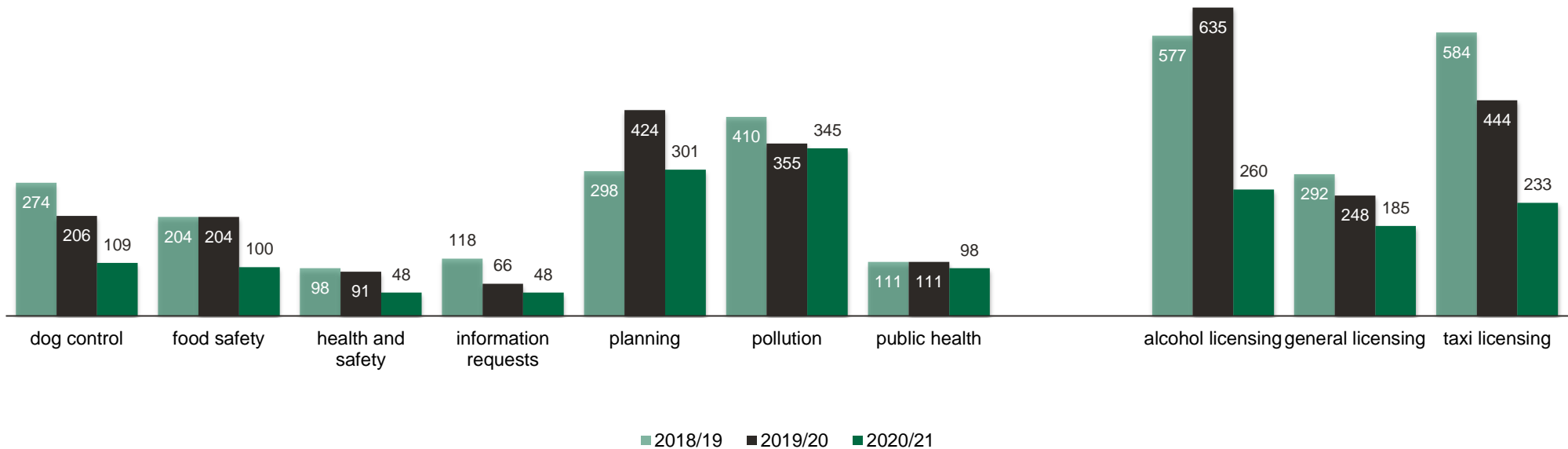
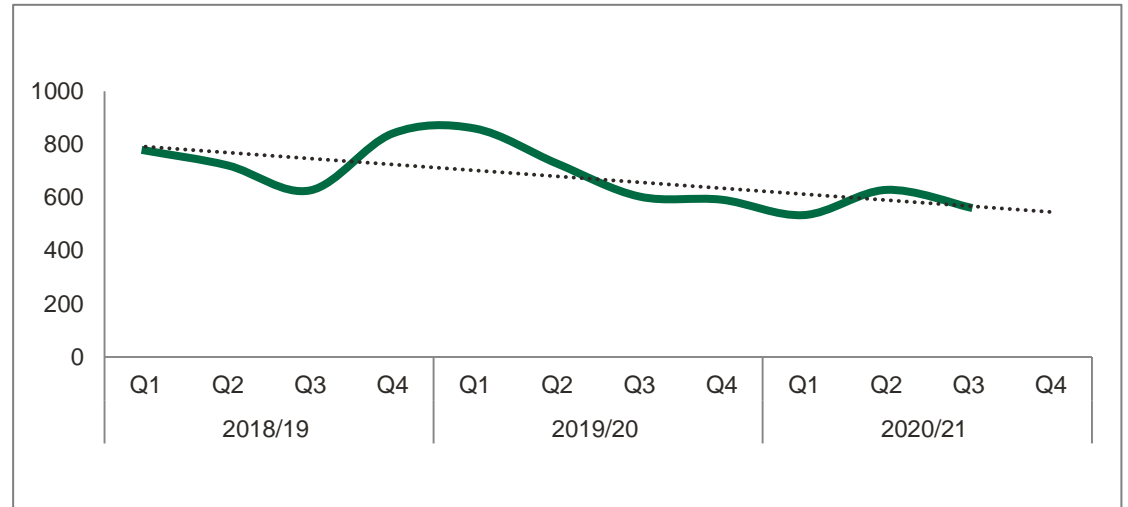
The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Wychavon district.

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.

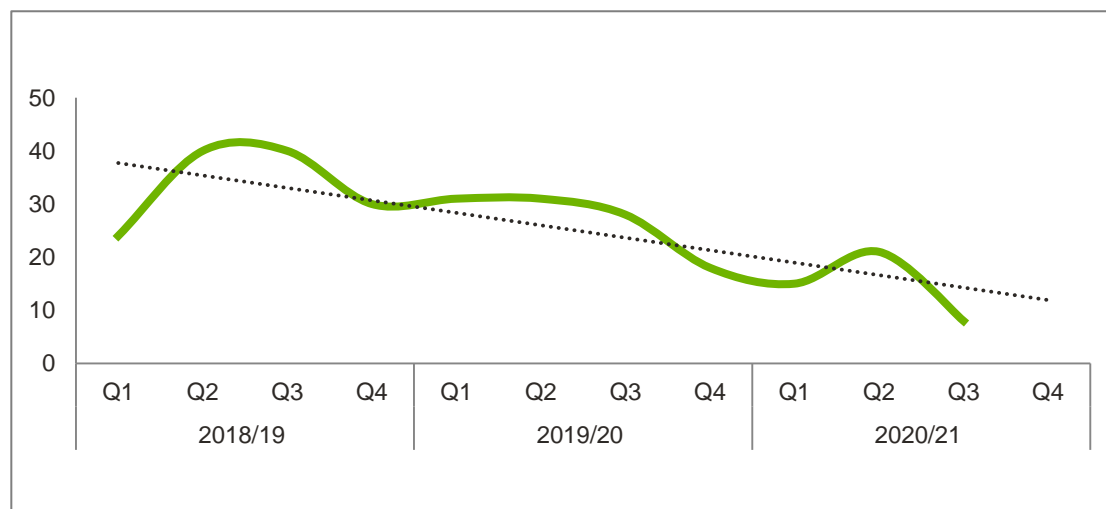


The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Wyre Forest district.

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.

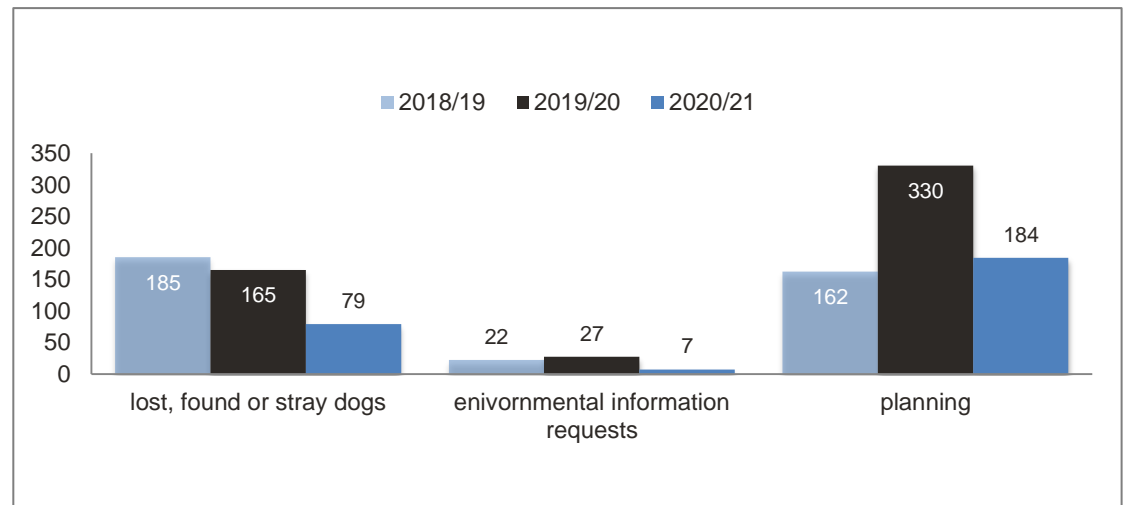
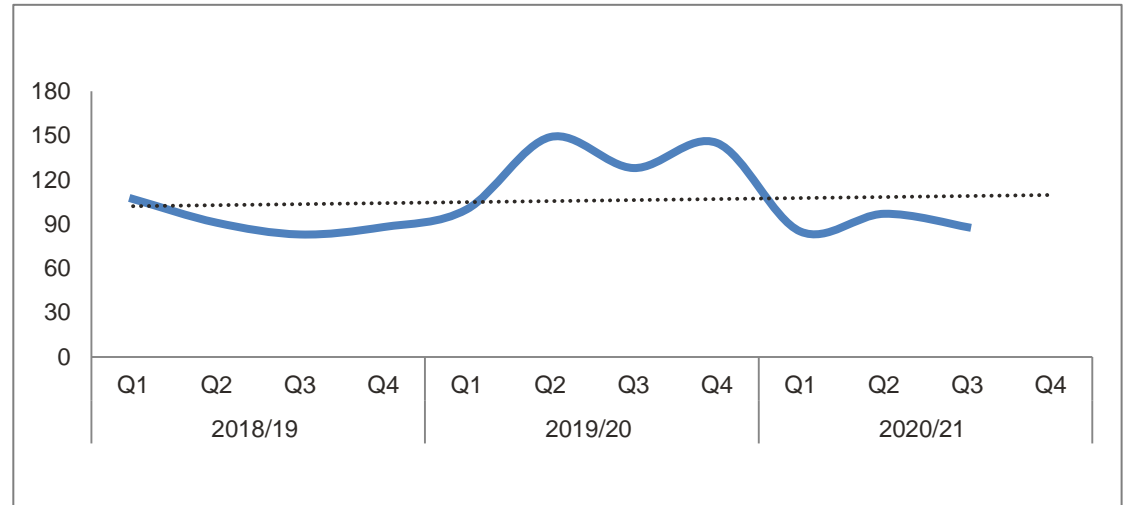


The dog control work WRS undertake for Cheltenham Borough Council is part of a three year contract with two other Gloucestershire authorities (from 2017) to deliver the collection, kennelling, returning of dogs to owners and rehoming of stray dog functions. The contract was renewed following delivery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

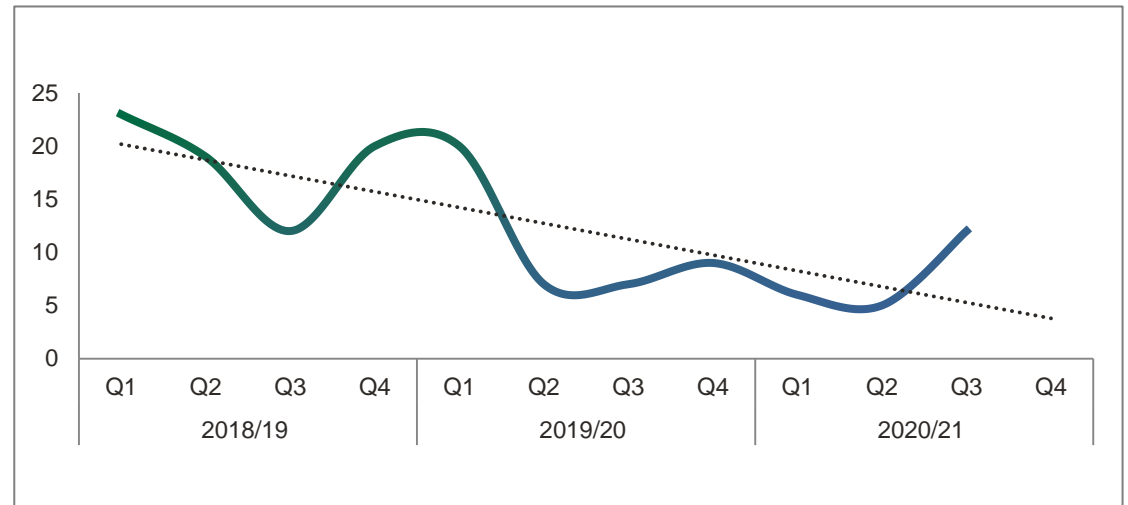


The dog control work WRS undertake for Gloucester City Council is part of a three year contract with two other Gloucestershire authorities (from 2017) to deliver the collection, kennelling, returning of dogs to owners and rehoming of stray dog functions. The contract was renewed following delivery by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

