

Worcestershire
Regulatory Services

Supporting and protecting you

Activity Report | 2020-21



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Foreword

Welcome to the fourth and final activity data report for 2020/21.

This shows the full year and what a year it has been, for good and ill. The team has put in a massive shift when it comes to our role in controlling the pandemic. Officers have worked incredibly hard to deliver the business control regime, both tackling non-compliance and supporting the re-opening process at the end of each lockdown. They have done this without fear or favour and, given the majority of it was achieved through dialogue and support, without the need to resort to formal action, I hope you will agree that this has been a success.

The Covid Advisor work has been tremendous and the people working under the WRS banner across the county have provided much needed support to businesses and communities. This was never a situation where "policing" would provide all the answers and the gentle nudge has helped in many locations. Also, not forgetting out lost to follow-up work where we have been the local contact tracing team, picking up the telephony process when the national system doesn't deliver and working with our district colleagues to go knock on doors when its been necessary. Again, we have managed a good deal of successes and data has been uploaded to the national tracing system.

That left our business as usual work, which is the focus of this document and as you will see from this report didn't go away. Whilst the Food Standards Agency suspended routine work, some food issues still had to be addressed. Accidents continued to happen in workplaces that were open, indeed we saw a slight increase, possibly down to staff having to follow less familiar routines and practices. People definitely continued to complain about noise and other sources of nuisance as you will see, although there was a reduction during the winter, as normal, which picked up as the weather began to improve.

Whilst there may have been a lull in the planning system during the first lockdown, that hasn't been the case subsequently and the number of applications requiring our input has remained high. Likewise with information requests, during lockdown it was quiet but as the economy re-opened so have the floodgates for Freedom of Information and Environmental Information requests. Licensing complaints and enquiries returned to the normal trajectory line by the end of Q3 and numbers of applications definitely increased as the Government's roadmap for re-opening continued, and this has increased further since the turn of the financial year with many premises looking to pick up with temporary events during the Summer.

So a very busy year for everyone, working through the most difficult of times. We hope you find the report interesting and if you've any questions please do contact myself or one of the Management team.



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.

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.

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 contact 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.

Community Environmental Health

At the start of Q4 the CEH officers embedded in the Public Health **Local Outbreak Response Team** (LORT) were at full stretch dealing with Covid outbreaks in businesses large and small. During the period, the agreement with HSE that we could deal with Covid measures at premises enforced by them continued to work well enabling officers to give Covid advice which might not have been otherwise available at short notice. Various projects were run to provide business support including advisory visits to commercial and industrial estates combined with letter drops providing updated advice and contact information. In general, most businesses had implemented good control measures and it was obvious that most of the infections had been picked up in the community. The exception was some small offices which decided on a full return to work for their employees only to find themselves having to close when most staff went down with Covid. Risk assessments were identified as poor and advice was given on improving control measures.

Our LORT team was also very involved in detailed backwards contact tracing of Covid cases to try and trace common sources of infection.

The LORT team leader spent considerable time working with the Three Counties Showground on re-planning a safe events programme for the first half of 2021 and also working with Worcester Racecourse on its recovery programme after a year in which it was not only flooded twice but also remained closed due to pandemic.

Q4 saw the implementation of Operation Corona Fries, which targeted takeaway food premises with poor food hygiene standards (FHRS 0-2) and were considered likely to employ poor COVID-19 controls. An intelligence product recognised this correlation by using data provided by the COVID Advisors. 13 businesses were inspected for both food hygiene and COVID controls. Overall, COVID controls were found to have been satisfactorily implemented. Of the 13 businesses inspected, 6 maintained their poor FHRS rating indicating no improvement on prior performance, 6 had their FHRS score reduced, whilst one improved from a FHRS core of 2 to 3, which indicates the business is broadly compliant. Work with these businesses is ongoing to secure compliance.

The **food** programme, which has been virtually suspended since 2020 by the Food Standards Agency, gradually began to take a new shape to cope with the backlog of premises due visits, both existing and new. We added two new contractors during this period who have been able to make a small but not inconsiderable contribution to what is one of our main statutory functions. During this period officers in the CEH team were also involved in inspecting FHRS 0-2 premises. Regrettably, many of these premises had not improved, some had deteriorated with Hygiene Improvement Notices having to be served and two prosecutions identified. We also piloted a remote inspection platform with a view to using this to review selected Level 5 businesses as part of the catch-up programme during 2021.

The Principal Officer was also involved in supporting the Worcestershire LEP-driven “Make It Worcestershire” (MIW) recovery programme for the hospitality industry. MIW is essentially a promotional platform created by a partnership of the WLEP, the County and District Councils, the HWCC and WRS. WRS also put in a successful bid for some support funding from BEIS and made a presentation to an LGA webinar.

All our food **Primary Authorities** have survived the pandemic although most have been inactive for past year apart from Aspens whose main contracts are in schools.

The county's **wellbeing** at work scheme also restarted activity with a new set of standards and a contracted management scheme led by the Chamber of Commerce. WRS continues to have a role on the Steering Group and provides four representatives to support businesses already part of and new to the scheme.

Demand for **nuisance** investigations remained significantly higher than usual during Q4, presumably again due to lockdown leading to more people working from and spending more time at from home and therefore being affected by a range of nuisance problems. Noise remains the most prevalent issue, including barking dogs and amplified music, and complaints about smoke from bonfires remained high. Easing of lockdown restrictions led to a spike in complaints about noise from licensed premises. However, this had been anticipated by the service and many complaints were dealt with on the basis that some degree of extra noise was inevitable from premises having to carry on their operations almost entirely outdoors. The significant increase in complaints about rodent activity noted during Q3 appears to have tailed off during Q4, despite the winter being generally very mild. Sewer baiting operations carried out by WRS targeted complaint hotspots and appear to have had some success.

An appeal against an abatement notice relating to noise from loud amplified music played in the garden of a licensed premises in Redditch district has been lodged, and trial papers have been prepared for the two day hearing which is due to take place at Kidderminster Magistrates Court in July.

We are continuing to work with a business in Wychavon to assist them with complying with an abatement notice relating to noise from an automated car wash, following their written undertaking during court proceedings.

A prosecution for noise nuisance in respect of barking dogs in Wyre forest district February was successful and resulted in fines and costs totalling £764, with wide press coverage.

A further prosecution relating to barking dogs in Worcester City is due to go to trial in June at Worcester Magistrates court.

Numerous complaints were received relating to light nuisance from upgraded lighting at a major supermarket in Malvern Hills district and following our intervention, the supermarket agreed to revise the lighting to the satisfaction of the affected residents.

Licensing

We started the quarter with another lockdown which after some optimism felt from licensed premises and the taxi trade over the December period caused again some worries and concerns from all different parts of the trade. In light of this we continued to work with districts to support both premisses license fees, animal licence and taxi renewal deferrals with extension periods until the end of March 2021.

We had a new member of the team join us as a Licensing Technical officer after one of our officers moved to work in the Trading Standards team but all was not lost as we have used this to our advantage and encompassed a joint working approach with our Trading Standards colleagues. There are a number of joint operations in the pipeline including test purchases at premises with a suspended licence for both illicit tobacco and alcohol.

The long awaited Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Standards draft policy proposals started to make their way through the Licensing Committee process with all Bromsgrove District Council, Redditch Borough, Wychavon District Council and Malvern District Council were first to be presented to members and go through to consultation. The remaining districts will be presented over the next few months with implementation early 2022.

Applications for licenses slightly reduced in Q4 but this is no different to previous years as January and February have always been quieter months for applications. We did however have a surge in enquiries related to personal licences and this has been a trend throughout the year as a result of the roadmap out of lockdown.

There were two inspections carried out at the West Midlands Safari Park to ensure the animal enclosures and new renovation plans were ready to re-open on April 12th and the Park had worked tirelessly in lockdown to ensure these were up to the standards we require.

As the roadmap to lockdown commenced on 12th April the team have been working closely with licensed premises and the CEH team to ensure compliance through regularly communications and enforcement activity.

Dog Wardens

In the last quarter the dog warden team have seen a slight reduction in the number of reports received, with a total of 201 contacts to the service, of which 66 were reported as lost or loose. In total 69 dogs of the 201 reported to us had no form of identification. WRS was successful in reuniting 108 dogs with their owners and rehoming 30 with recognised animal rehoming charities. Sadly 16 dogs needed to spend time in our vets due to their age or welfare concerns. We cared for a further 3 dogs while their owners have been in hospital.

Air Quality

Officers have commenced preparation of the partners 2020-21 Annual Status Reports for DEFRA that are due in June. It is anticipated that the reports should be completed on schedule but there will be a limitation to the reporting outcomes due to 2020 presenting abnormal emissions monitoring due to the lockdown. Progress reporting on air quality improvement actions will also be limited for these reasons, with reporting also completed around June.

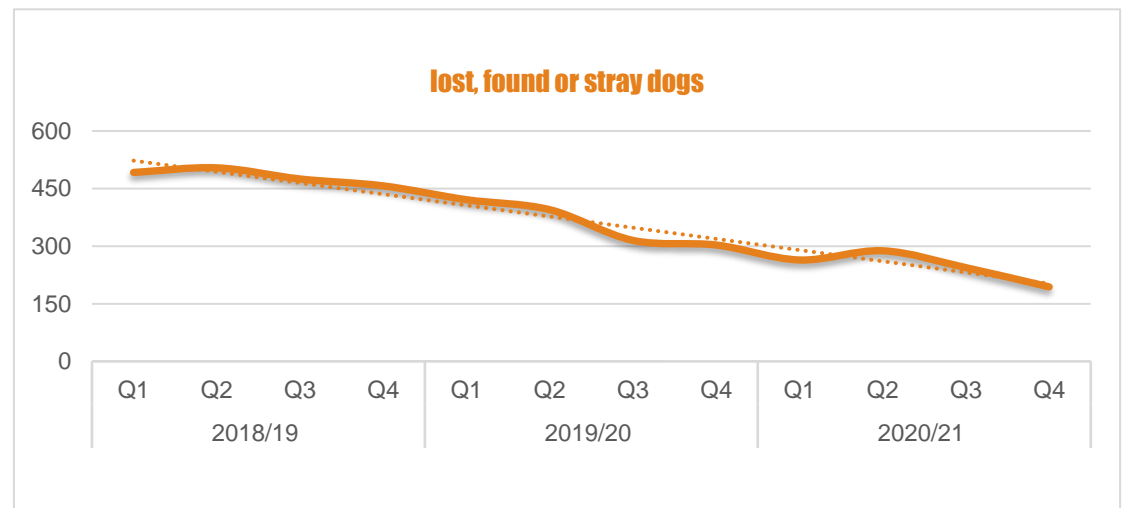
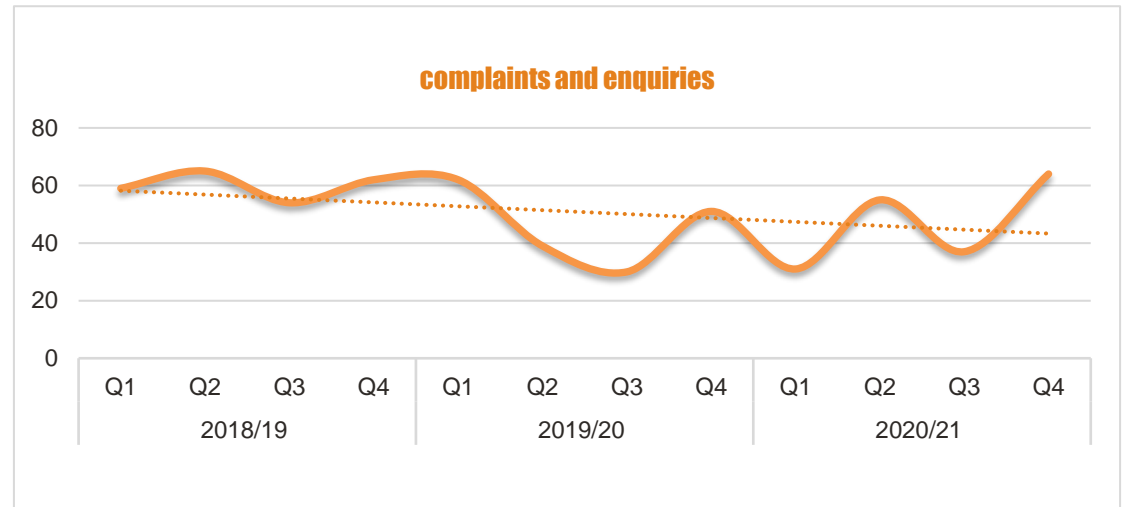
Contaminated Land

Officers are currently in discussions with the Environment Agency concerning the old Fire station in Windsor Street Bromsgrove. The site has historically been inadvertently contaminated with FOS/PFOA substances more commonly known as forever chemicals. WRS officers have proposed that the fire station becomes a 'special site' under the contaminated land regime and are seeking the views of the EA as to its subsequent determination.

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 to WRS during the year has continued to decline, with the total number of cases a reduction of 48% and 30% compared to previous years. The nature of cases has remained consistent however, with approximately 64% relating to 'contained' stray dogs. This means the dog was found and held by, for example, a member of the public. Approximately 74% of stray dogs were returned to their owners, whilst 17% were rehomed.

In general terms, WRS receives a low number of dog control complaints. Based on the 133 complaints received this year, 47% related to fouling and persistent straying, whilst 41% related to dangerous dogs.



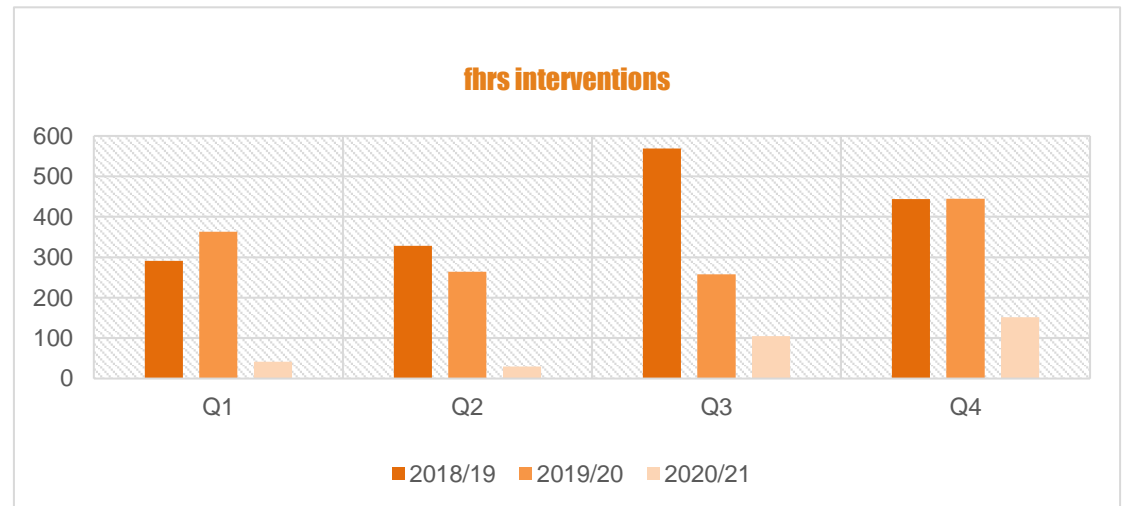
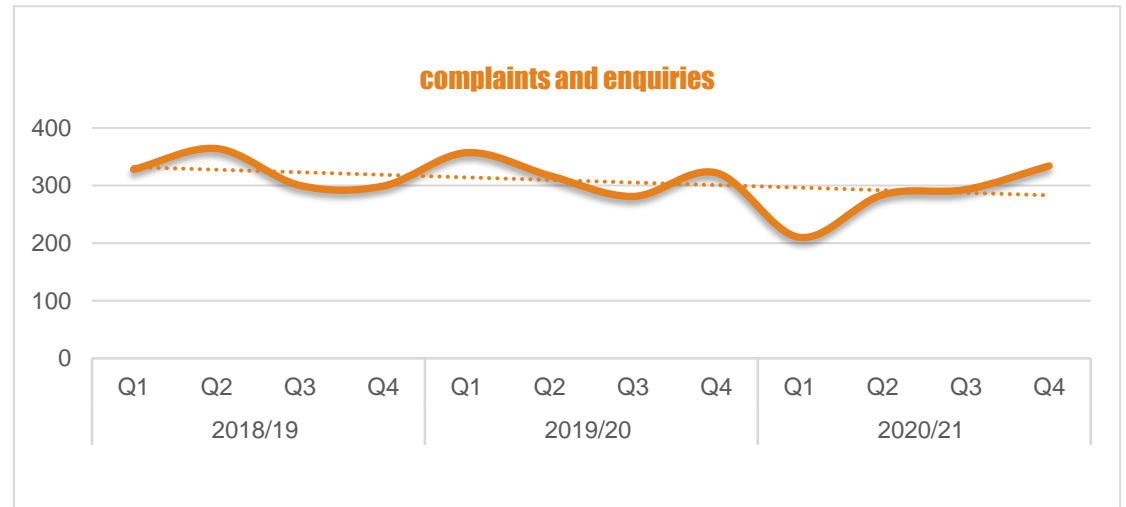
Officers have confirmed that the blended inspection regime has been a success, with compliance being secured across the majority of sites.

We are also pleased to confirm that none of the regulated business have suffered bankruptcy during the lockdown period, with many sectors going back to business as usual. It is anticipated that intelligence gathering around non-complaint businesses will resume at the end of the first quarter of 2021/22, along with site visits, should lockdown restrictions continue to ease.

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.

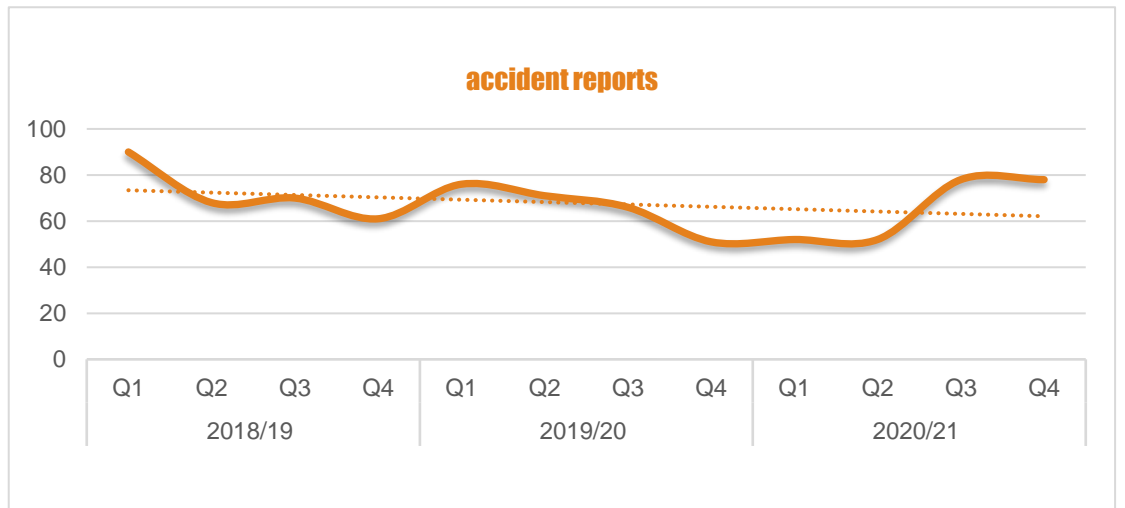
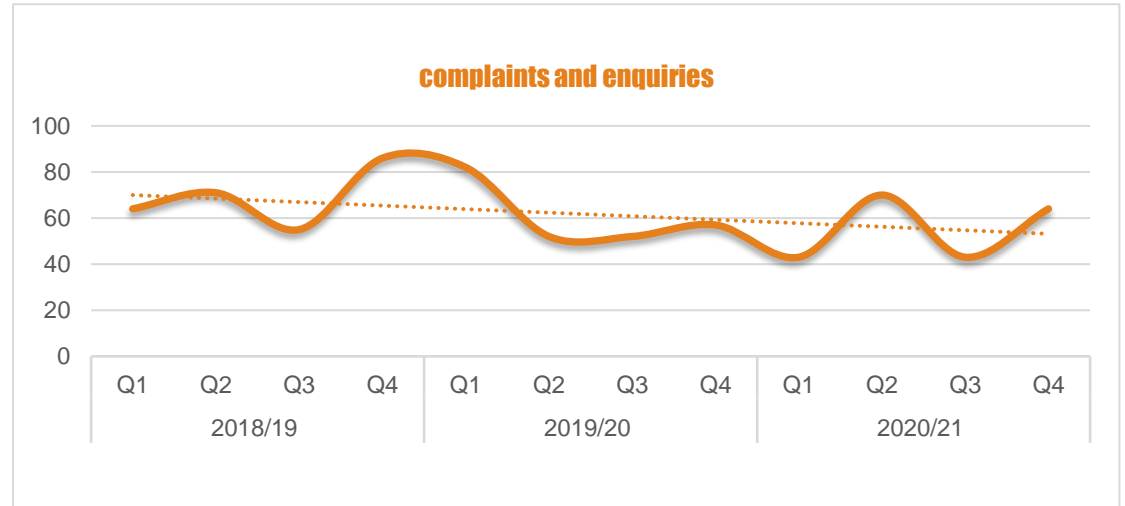
The number of food safety cases reported to WRS during the year is a reduction of 12% compared to previous years. This reduction however, particularly during quarter one, coincided with the closing of many hospitality premises due to restrictions implemented as a result of COVID-19. Based on the 492 complaints received, approximately 80% related to products purchased from food premises, whilst 20% related to hygiene standards and practices.

A total of 16 interventions conducted this year resulted in a non-compliant (0, 1 or 2) rating being issued. The majority of these ratings were issued to small food retailers or takeaways. Whilst a significantly lower number of interventions were undertaken this year due to COVID-19 restrictions, the majority of non-complaint ratings were issued during quarter four due to a targeted food safety project.



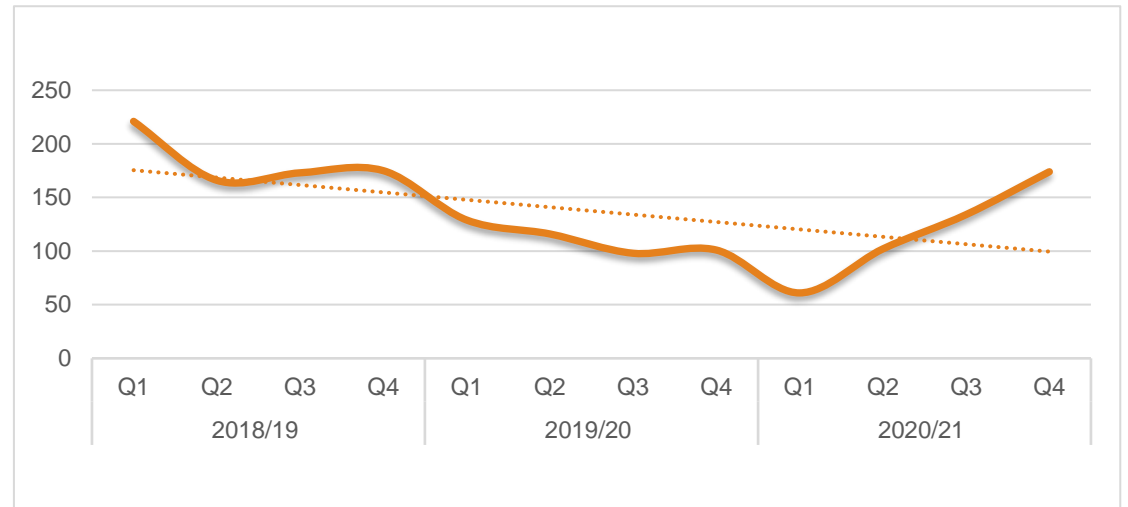
The chart (top right) shows the number of complaints and enquiries recorded by WRS over a three year period relating to health and safety at work. This includes requests for business advice. The chart (bottom right) shows the number of notifications received by WRS relating to accidents.

The number of health and safety cases reported to WRS during the year is a reduction of 5% and 15% compared to previous years. Appxoamtely 54% of cases have been reports of accidents; with 36% relating to injuries where a worker is incapacitated for more than seven days. A further 36% related to viruses and diseases; specifically positive COVID-19 tests at permises 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



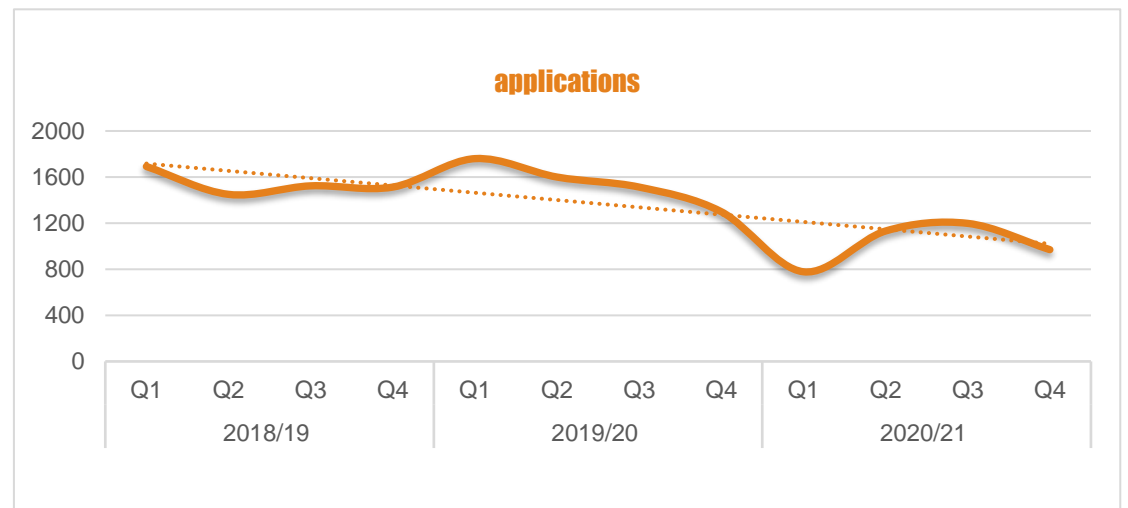
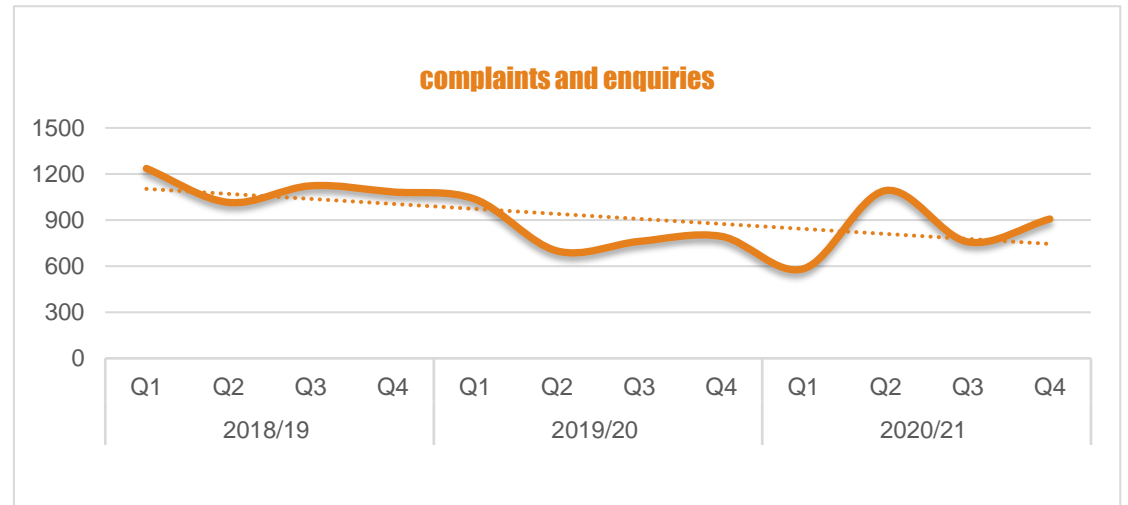
The chart (top right) shows the number complaints and enquiries recorded by WRS over a three year period relating to licensing. The chart (bottom right) shows the number of licensing applications.

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 reported to WRS during the year is a reduction of 21% and 40% 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 54% of cases have been applications and registrations; with 38% relating to private hire and hackney carriage vehicles.

In general terms, WRS receives a higher number of enquiries about licensing matters than complaints about licensed or unlicensed activity. Based on the 498 complaints received this year, 38% have related to alcohol and entertainment, whilst 25% have related to taxis and 18% to animals.

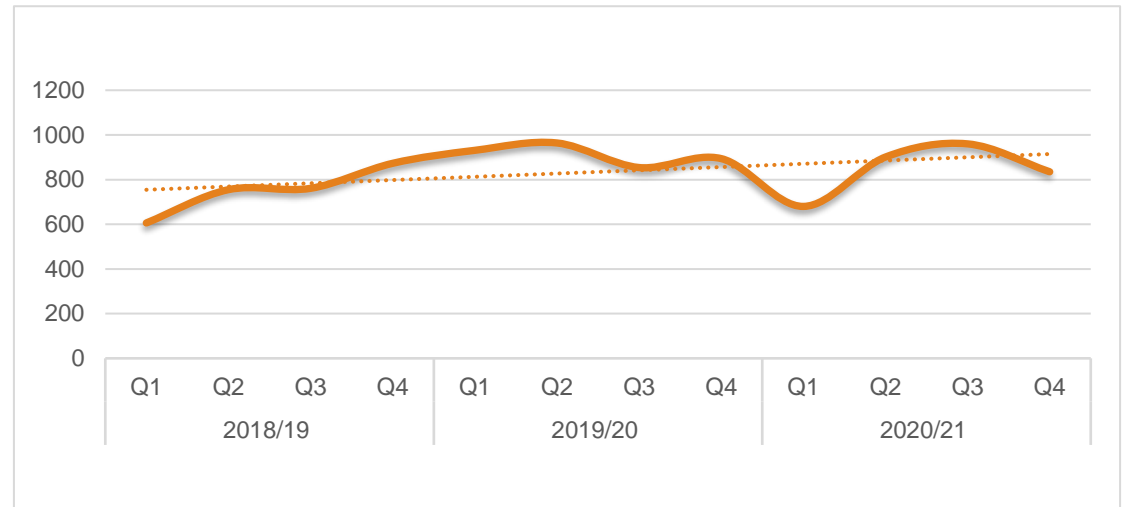


The chart (right) shows the number of planning enquiries completed by WRS over a three year period. The majority of these requests are consultations but can also include requests to discharge conditions.

Planning requests relate to the following;

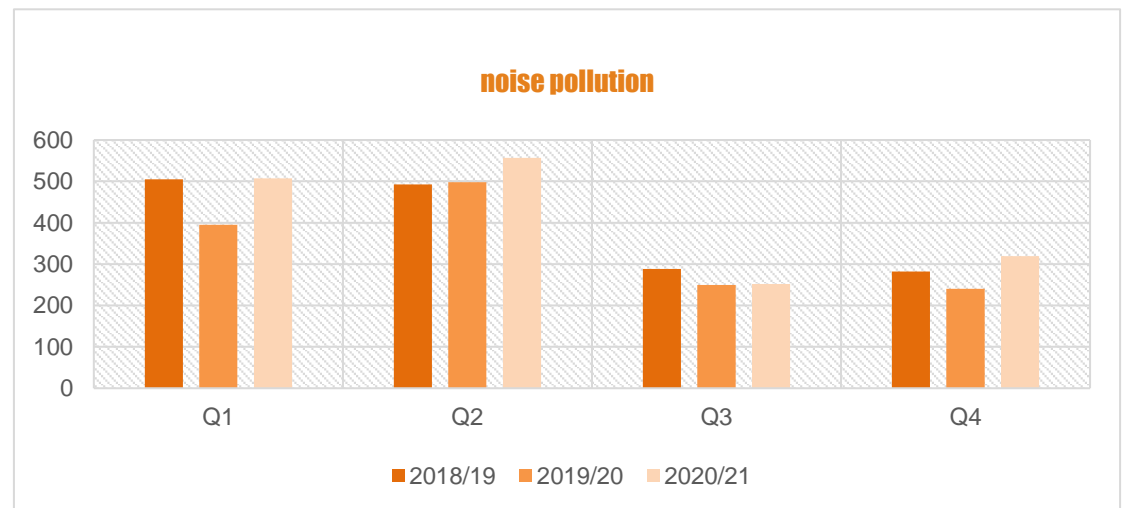
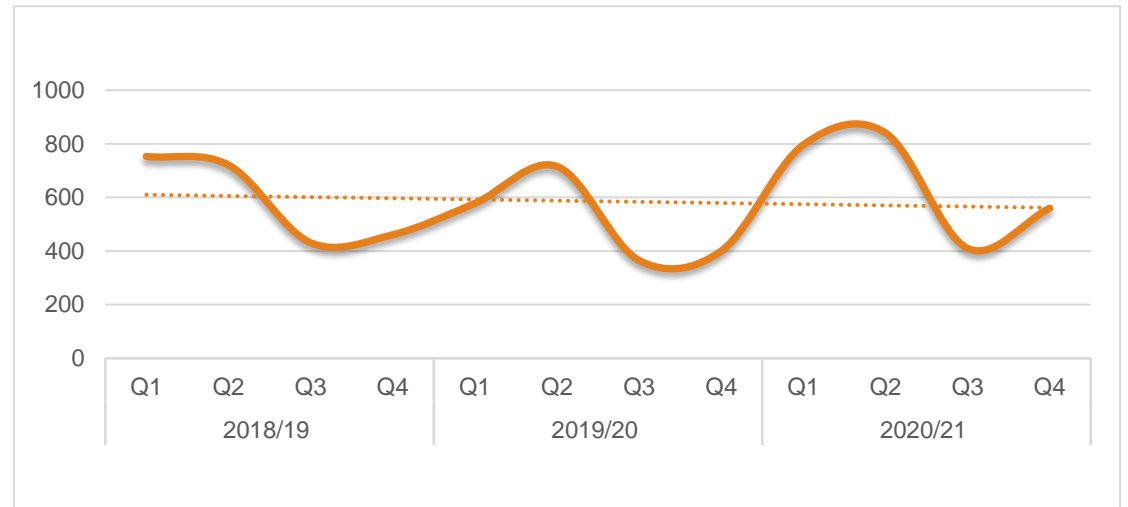
- Air Quality
- Contaminated Land
- Environmental Permitting
- Food
- Health and Safety
- Nuisance / Noise
- Private Water Supplies

The number of planning enquiries recorded by WRS during the year is an increase of 12% compared to 2018/19 but a reduction of 7% compared to 2019/20. Whilst there has been fluctuation in the number of enquiries, the type of cases has remained relatively consistent. Approximately 91% were consultations, whilst 52% related to contaminated land. A fifth of planning enquiries were completed, on a contractual basis, on behalf of other local authorities.



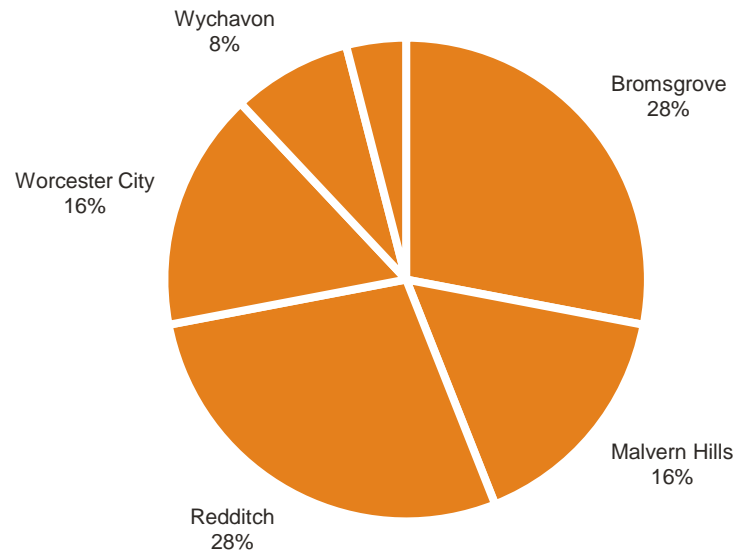
The chart (right) shows the number of complaints and enquiries recorded by WRS over a three year period relating to pollution. Types of cases recorded under this category include contamination incidents, air pollution (smoke, fumes and gases), light pollution and noise pollution. The chart (bottom right)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

The number of pollution cases recorded by WRS this year is an increase of 23% and 10% compared to previous years. Approximately 43% 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 and the burning of commercial waste. Whilst COVID-19 restrictions are a notable factor in the level of incidents recorded, particularly for domestic nuisances, it should be noted that 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.

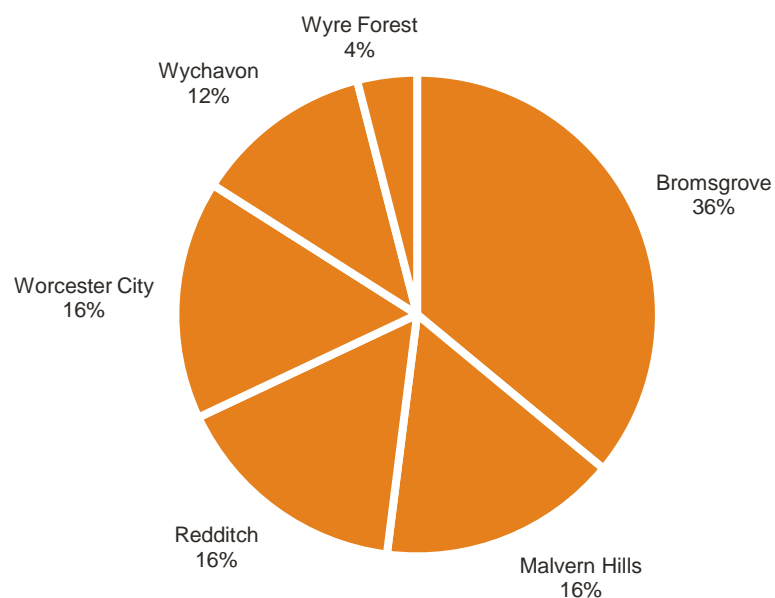
Note: Data shown on this page represents the 'year to date' and will continue to increase each quarter until the end of year report is published.



Ward	Total	Population	Rate
Wribbenhall And Arley	34	5,444	6.25
Perryfields	8	1,501	5.33
Abbey	31	6,620	4.68
Norton	17	3,707	4.59
Avoncroft	15	3,300	4.55
Lowes Hill	13	2,903	4.48
Warndon	25	5,669	4.41
Sanders Park	16	3,651	4.38
Charford	15	3,665	4.09
Central (Redditch)	28	6,844	4.09
Rubery South	12	2,984	4.02
Saint John	34	8,836	3.85
Lodge Park	21	5,591	3.76
Bedwardine	29	8,167	3.55
Chase	22	6,217	3.54
Lindridge	8	2,261	3.54
Greenlands	32	9,329	3.43
Winyates	28	8,184	3.42
Church Hill	27	8,062	3.35
Hallow	6	1,840	3.26
Gorse Hill	19	5,839	3.25
Crabbs Cross	18	5,647	3.19
Evesham South	17	5,423	3.13
Pickersleigh	20	6,397	3.13
Droitwich Central	8	2,621	3.05

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.

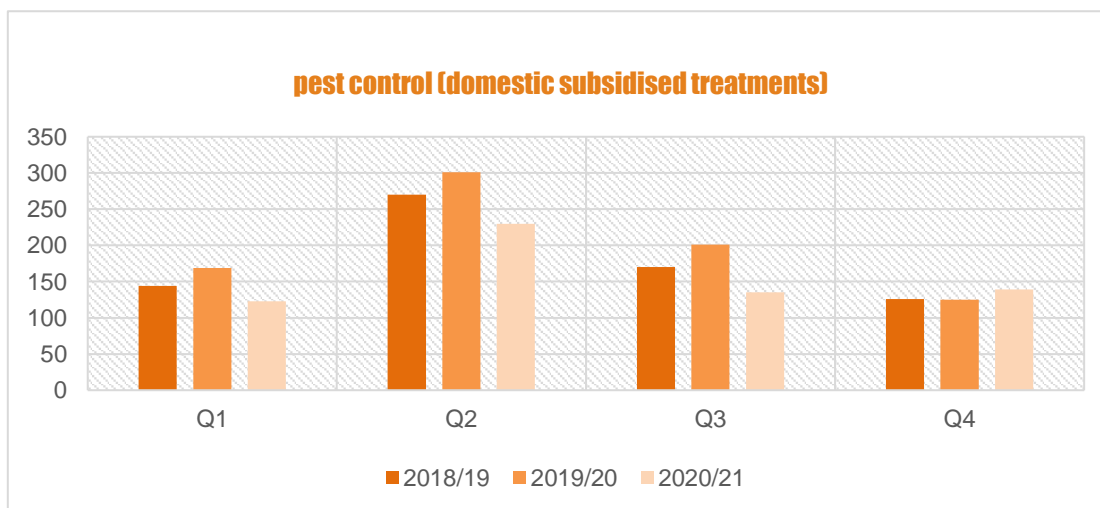
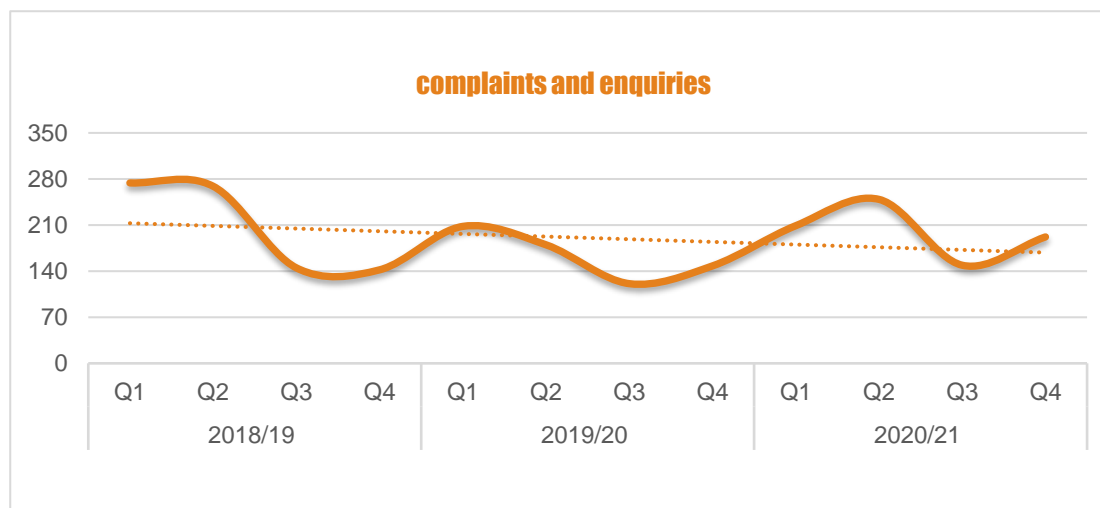


Ward	Total	Population	Rate
Droitwich Central	13	2,570	5.06
Cathedral	54	11,488	4.70
Upton And Hanley	18	4,153	4.33
Rainbow Hill	23	5,525	4.16
Lowes Hill	12	2,888	4.16
Charford	15	3,670	4.09
Charford	15	3,670	4.09
Catshill North	11	2,818	3.90
Offmore And Comberton	35	9,726	3.60
Barnt Green And Hopwood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

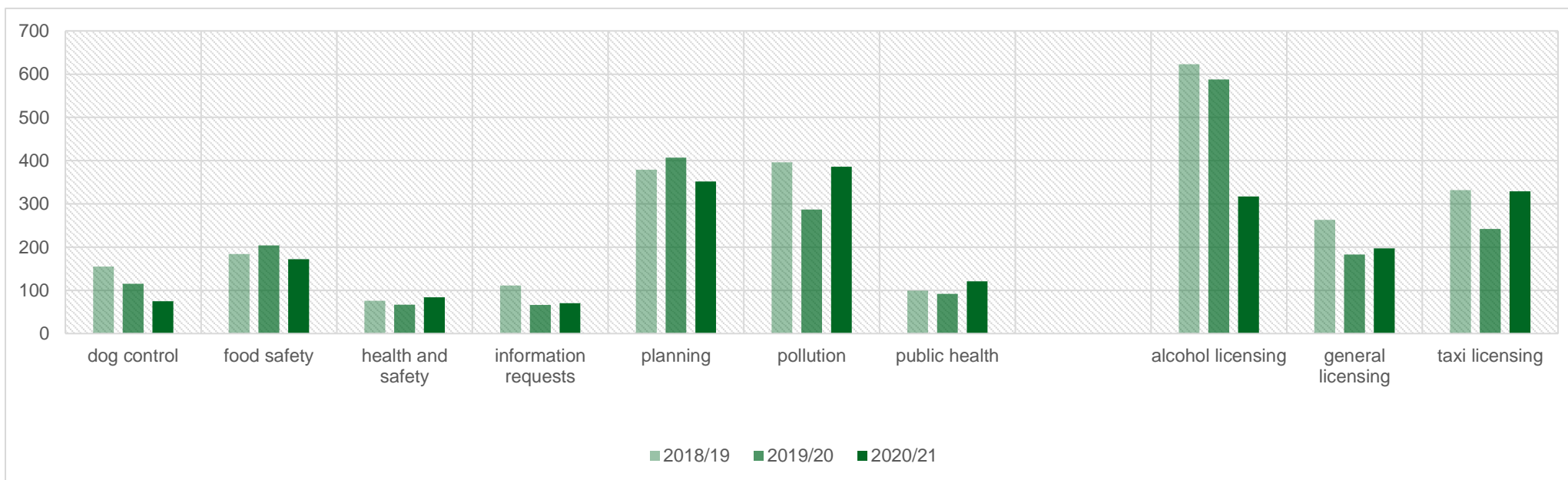
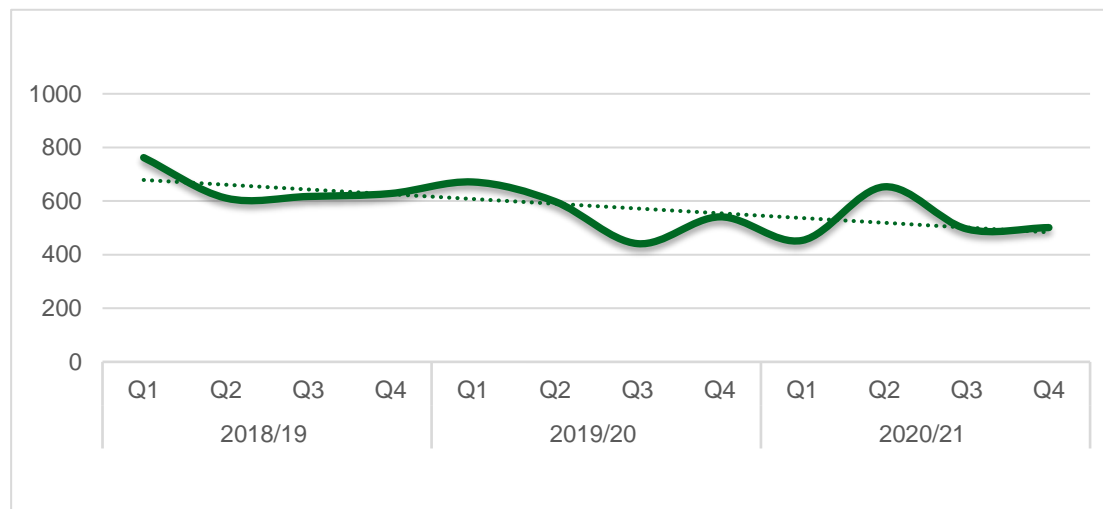
The number of public health cases recorded by WRS this year is a reduction of 3% compared to 2018/19, but an increase of 25% compared to 2019/20. Approximately 65% of cases have related to pest control; whether enquiries about treatments or sewer baiting, or complaints about pest control issues caused by the activity of neighbouring residents or businesses.

Whilst there is a lower number of subsidised treatments, it should actually be seen as an increase; as only three districts are offering a service compared to four in previous years. Anecdotally, 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. Of the 139 domestic treatments undertaken during quarter three, 79% were due to the presence of rats, 38% were in relation to properties located in the Redditch district, 36% were in relation to the Wychavon district and 26% were in relation to the Bromsgrove district.



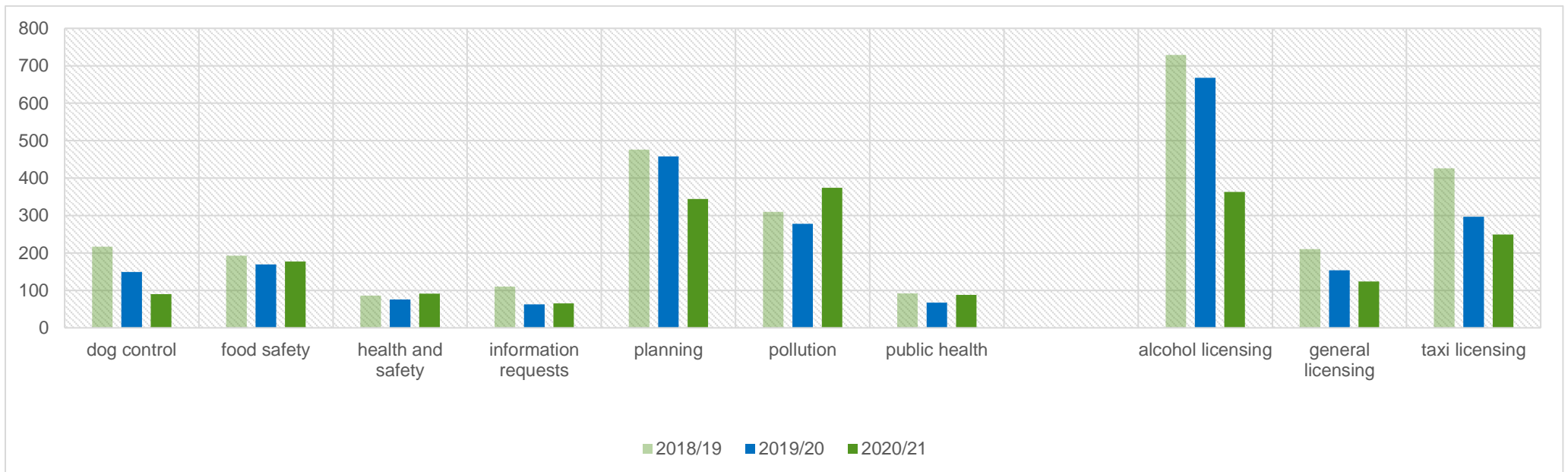
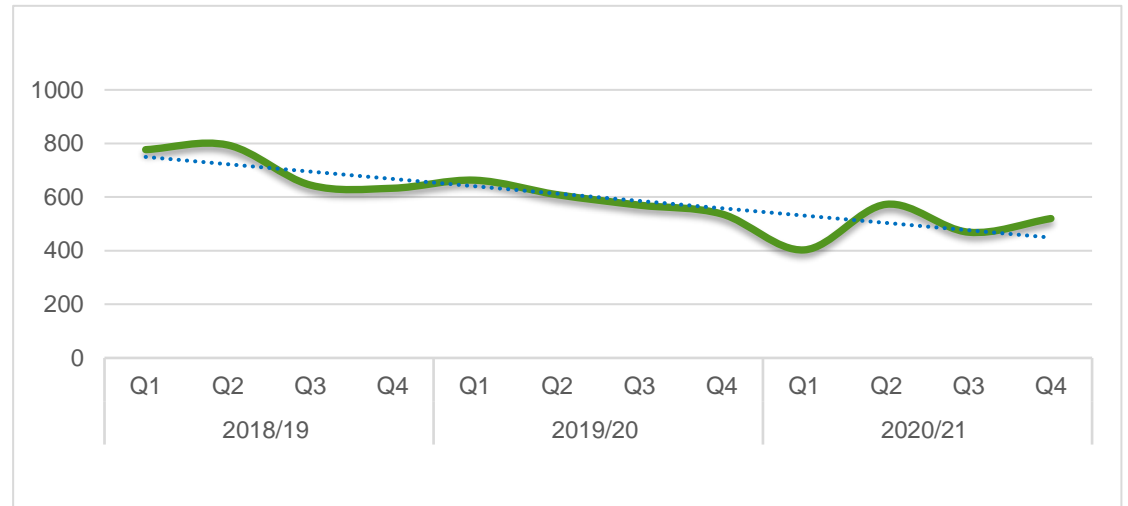
The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Bromsgrove district.

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.



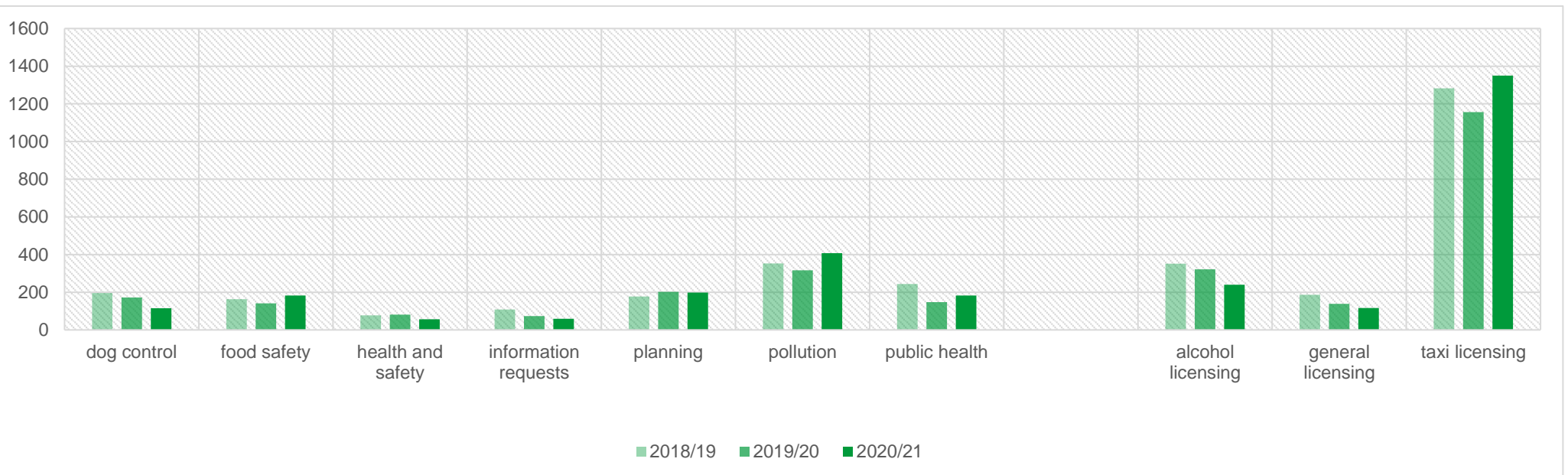
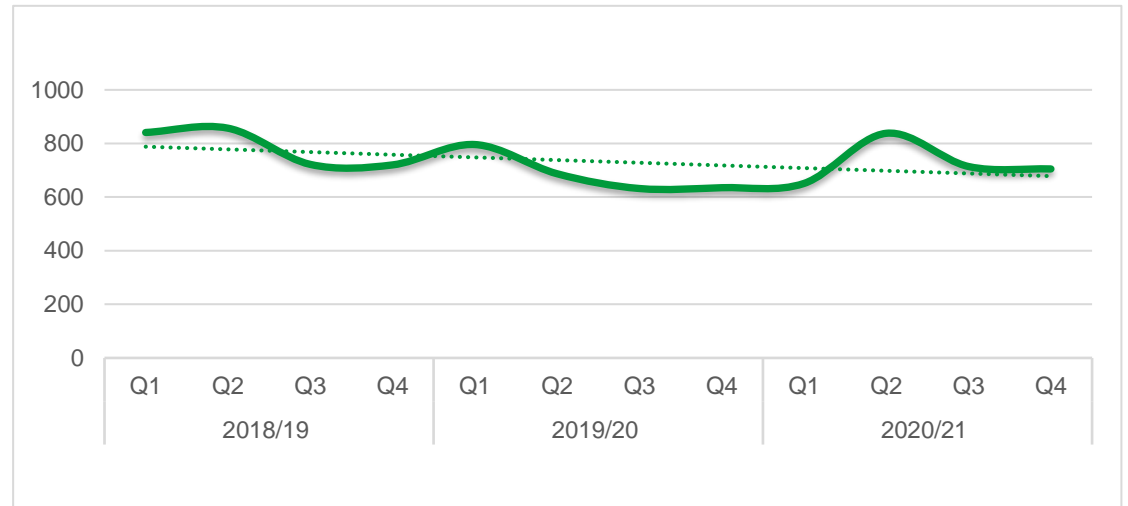
The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Malvern Hills district.

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.



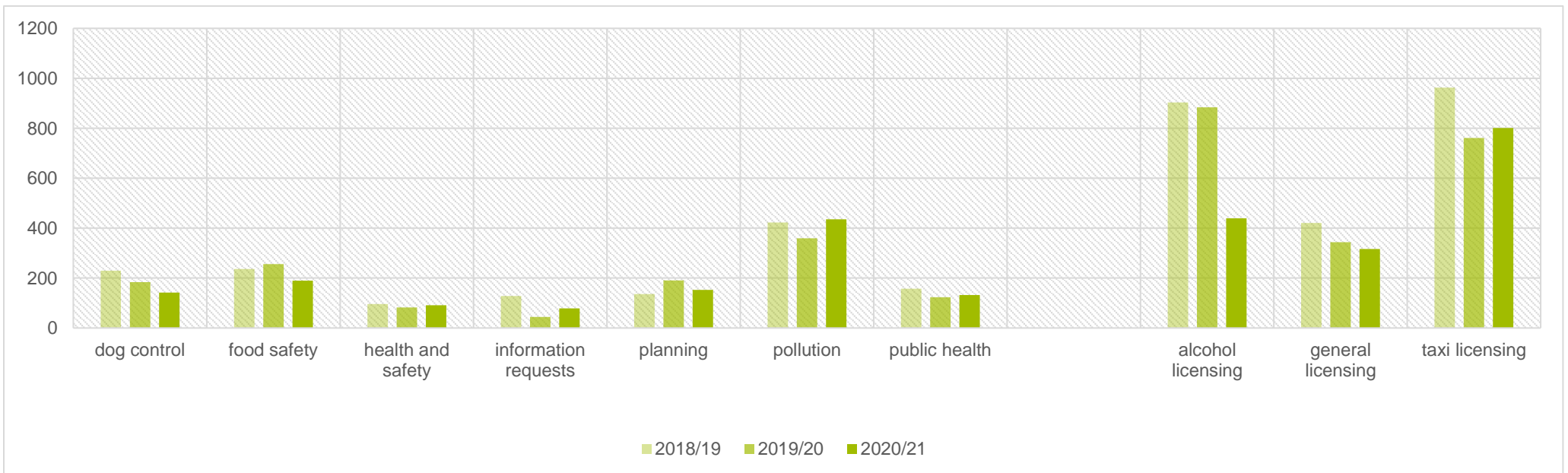
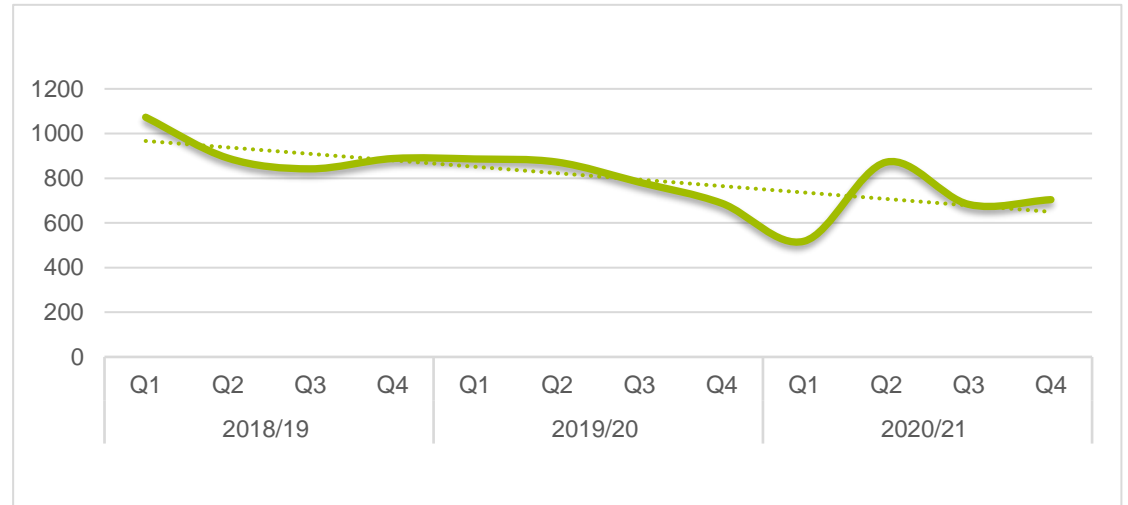
The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Redditch district.

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.



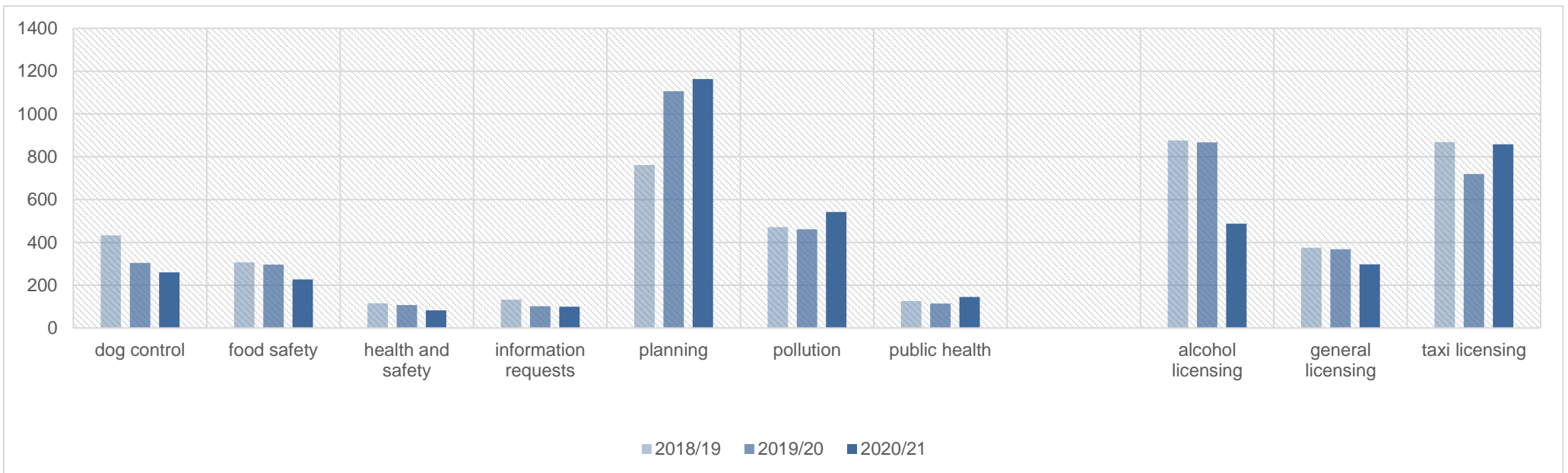
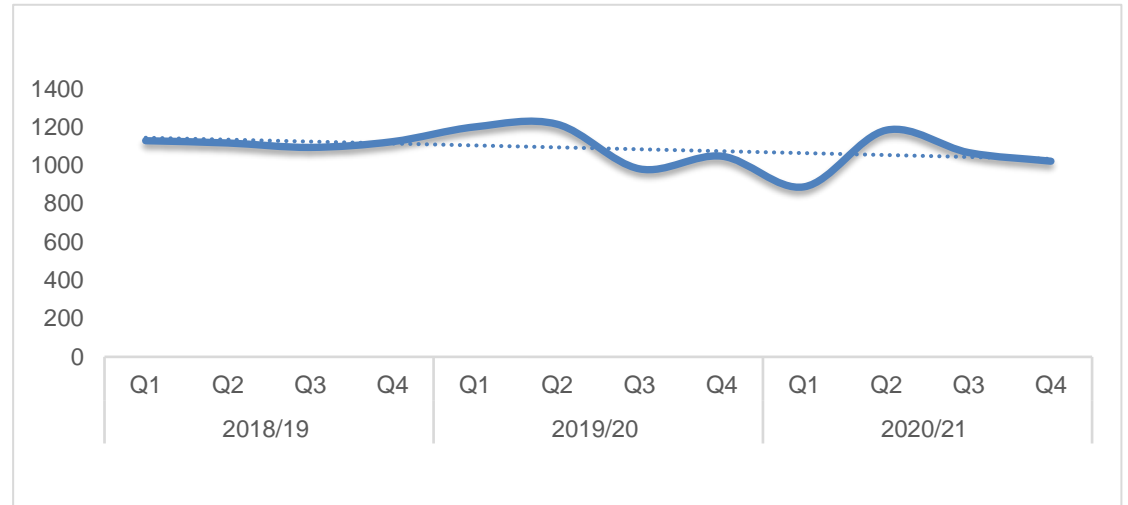
The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Worcester City district.

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.



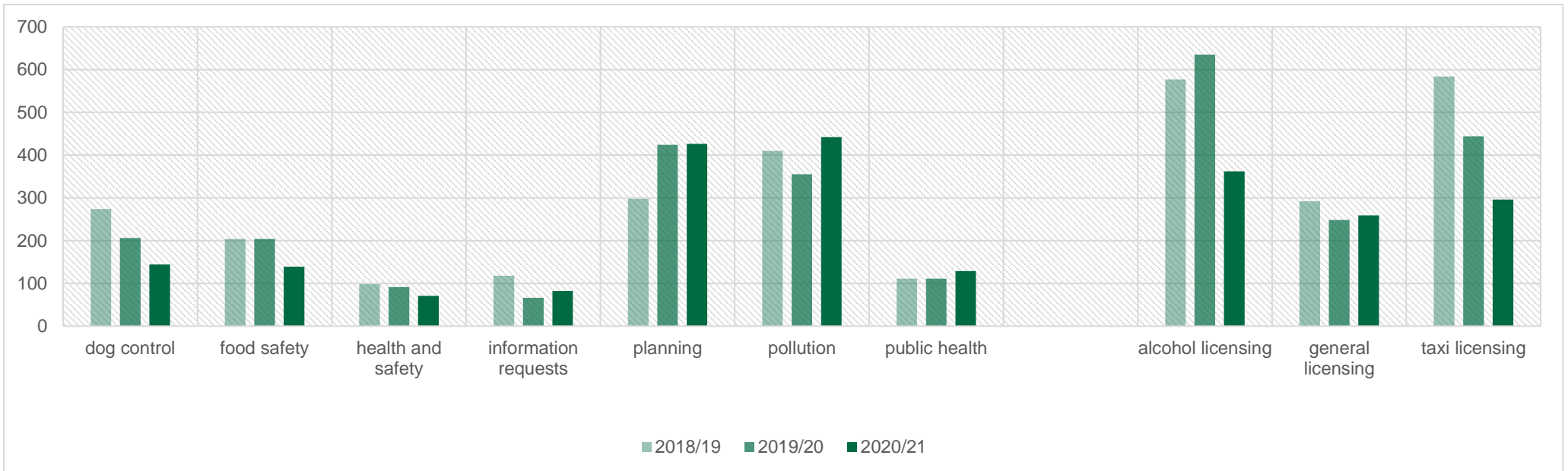
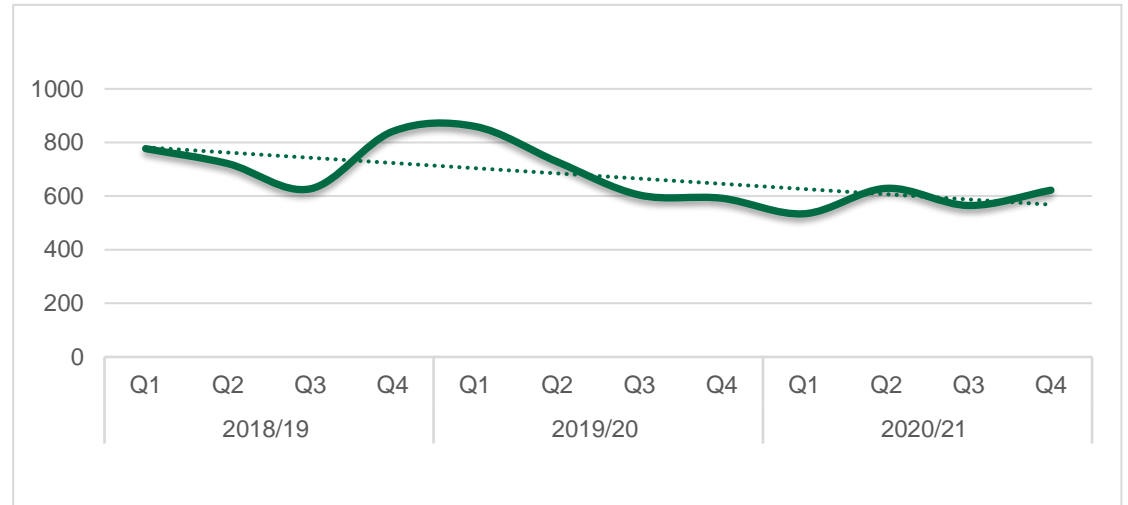
The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Wychavon district.

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.

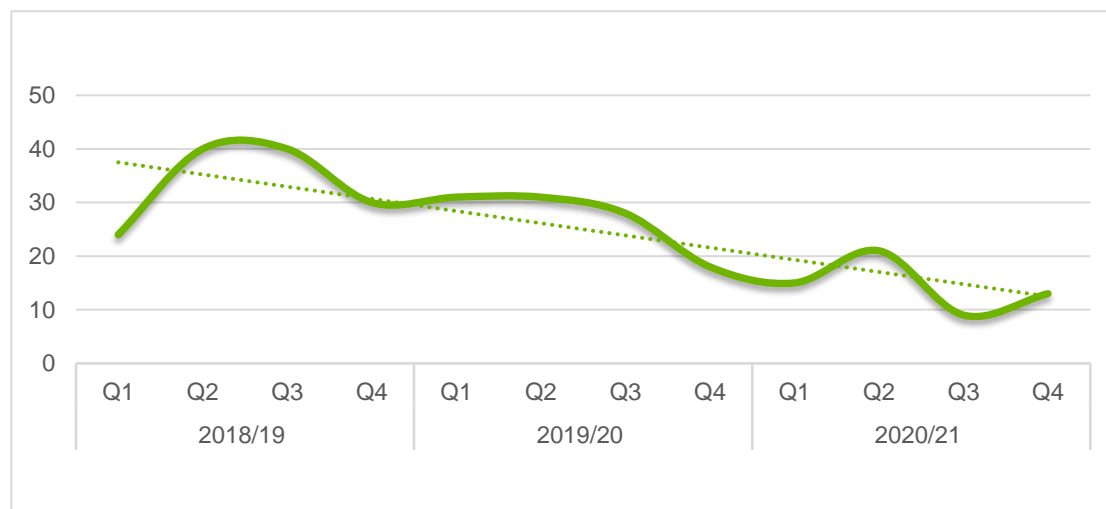


The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Wyre Forest district.

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.

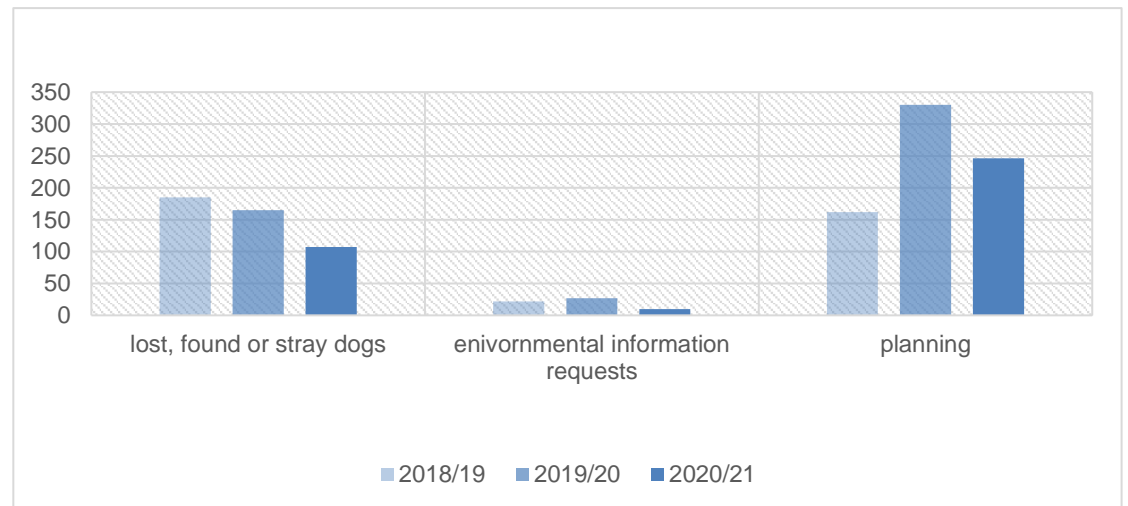
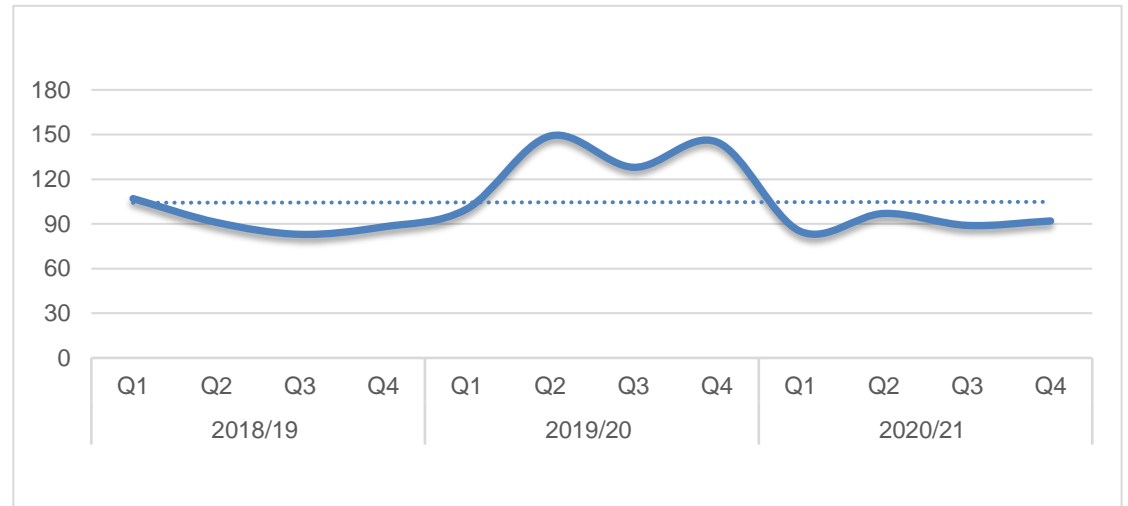


The dog control work WRS undertake for Cheltenham Borough Council is part of a three year contract with two other Gloucestershire authorities (from 2017) to deliver the collection, kennelling, returning of dogs to owners and rehoming of stray dog functions. The contract was renewed following delivery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

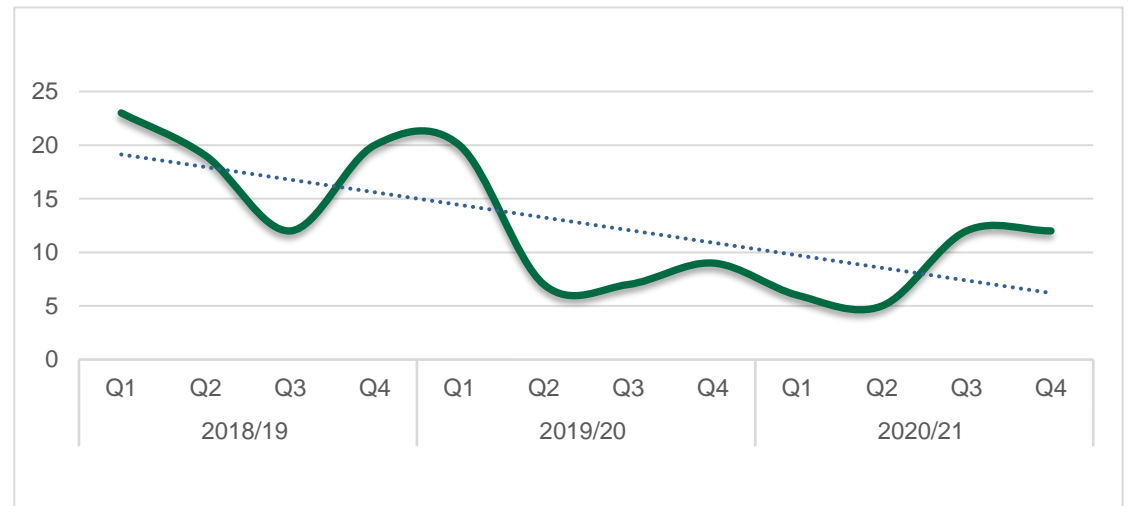


The dog control work WRS undertake for Gloucester City Council is part of a three year contract with two other Gloucestershire authorities (from 2017) to deliver the collection, kennelling, returning of dogs to owners and rehoming of stray dog functions. The contract was renewed following delivery by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

There was a reduction in the level of planning activity this year due to the Covid-19 outbreak. In addition, WRS postponed PPC inspections due to the lockdown and some businesses mothballing their activities due to staff furlough.



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

