

WRS Board

Date: 30th September 2021

Title: Activity and Performance Data Quarter 1 2021/22

Recommendation

That the Board notes the Report and that members use the contents of the activity data in their own reporting back to fellow members of the partner authorities.

Background

The detail of the report focuses on the first quarter of 2021/22 but the actual data allows comparison with previous quarters and previous years.

Contribution to Priorities

Board members have asked the service to provide data on activity levels to help reassure local members that WRS continues to address a range of issues in each partner area and more broadly across the county.

Report

Activity Data

The first quarter of 2021/22 saw the first real signs of stepping out of the Covid 19 control regime. March had seen the first very small steps with minor relaxations, but April onwards would see major changes impacting on both personal freedoms and the reduction of controls on business activities.

In April, we saw the re-opening of all retail premises and hospitality businesses were allowed to use their outside spaces to serve customers. This created the first real opportunity for these businesses to have customers on the premises for anything other than collection. A range of mainly outdoor attractions re-opened along with a number of lower risk services. May saw pubs having people back inside and a range of other indoor entertainment businesses like cinemas re-opening. However, all of the social distancing requirements remained in place, meaning that capacities continued to be limited. We were working towards 21st of June, when all of the remaining measures, including social distancing, would be relaxed if possible. As we now know, the final step to unlocking ended up being delayed as a precaution against rising case numbers, but this was just a slowing of progress to the point where the final controls we were



operating with were lifted.

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) suspended the 'Food Hygiene inspection' programme at the beginning of lockdown in March 2020 and this continued throughout 2020/21 and into 2021/22. The service continued to follow as well as it could what the FSA, expected with a range of activities focused on the highest risk businesses and new entrants. In some cases, this was done alongside Covid control visits. Food complaints and enquiries was slightly up on Q4 last year, but only marginally. Numbers of interventions for the period were significantly up on the same period last year and approaching the year prior. This represents the beginnings of more engagement back with food businesses as we began to move out of the control regime. Of those 318 interventions, only 16 resulted in a score below 3 on the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (the level required for a business to be deemed compliant,) and the majority of these were in the hospitality trades.

Q3 and 4 of 2020/21 saw an increase in accident reports under the Health and Safety at Work Act but Q1 this year saw this fall back to just below the trend line. This fall was, however, off-set by an increase in complaints and enquiries. This quarter also saw the courts passing sentence on the two high profile cases that featured in the recent Members Newsletter.

Numbers of strays reported in Q1 was up significantly on the previous quarter but the animals in question were mainly contained and easy to collect. The growth in dog ownership during the pandemic period has led to concerns of an increase in abandonment following returns to work and the unwinding of furlough should this lead to people losing their jobs. There is little positive evidence for this at this stage. Numbers of dog related queries remained on trend.

The number of licensing cases reported to WRS during Q1 represents an increase of 13% compared to the final quarter of last year. This increase is largely due to a rise in the volume of applications and registrations, with the volume of Temporary Event notices continuing to grow as pubs and other bodies looked to hold events as the control regime lessened. Approximately 57% of cases recorded were applications; with 29% relating to private hire and hackney carriage vehicles, and 17% relating to temporary events.

In general terms, WRS receives a higher number of enquiries about licensing matters than complaints about licensed or unlicensed activity. Based on the 121 complaints received during Q1, 28% related to taxis, 25% related to alcohol and entertainment and 16% related to animals.

The number of planning enquiries recorded by WRS during quarter one is an increase of 30% compared to the final quarter of last year. In keeping with previous quarters however, the nature of enquiries has remained relatively consistent. Approximately 92% were consultations, with Planning colleagues requiring support and some 50% of those related to contaminated land issues. A fifth of planning enquiries remain ones that are completed, on a contractual basis, on behalf of other local authorities. This shows that at least one of our income streams has remained positive during



the period.

The number of pollution cases recorded by WRS during Q1 represents an increase of 19% compared to the final quarter of last year; but is consistent with seasonal variations encountered in previous years. Nuisance reports always increase as the weather improves. Approximately 41% of cases recorded related to domestic noise, whilst 13% related to smoke nuisance. Garden bonfires are commonplace in the early Spring as gardeners prepare for the year ahead and these are not always looked upon favourably by neighbours. Guidance on garden bonfires is signposted on the WRS website.

Noise from commercial premises (such as hospitality premises) was another prominent case type. This is likely to be partly down to the public having acclimatised to a somewhat quieter environment during the pandemic control period and the return of pubs and the night-time economy, particularly live music, has not been greeted favourably in all quarters.

Covid related activities

Covid related enforcement activities continued through the quarter. EHOs embedded within the Local Outbreak Response Team remained busy tackling business outbreaks and undertaking detailed backwards contact tracing exercises in areas with high case numbers. Covid related enforcement activities continued with officers regularly undertaking pro-active out of hours work in evenings and at weekends to check that the provisions of the various stages of the re-opening were being met by businesses. There was much good practice seen as most businesses tried to meet the requirements and officers were pleased to advise on making things work better. There was some evidence of people pushing the numbers who they could seat but this was understandable given where they had been for the previous 12 months.

Covid Advisors were out daily in most parts of the county but focusing on those areas where case numbers were highest. Board members continued to be included in the weekly email update on what was found and how this new team was dealing with the public, reminding them of what to do. Again, on average, over 500 businesses and over 1000 members of the public have been spoken to each week by the team.

Lost to follow-up, where we deal with the contact tracing of those who the national system had missed, was operating throughout the period, with demand reflecting the case levels in the county. Officers continued to work closely with district colleagues in a number of the Councils to door-knock those who did not reply to our local telephone calls and as local teams moved back onto their business as usual activities the team took over from those colleagues so work could continue. Fortunately, numbers reported to the police for not self-isolating remained relatively small throughout.



Performance

As always, reporting against the suite of indicators is more limited for the first quarter. The non-business customer measure at 71.3%, slightly down on the 74% last year and business customers is at 96.8%, still good but below last year. There were signs of weariness with the Covid rules during this quarter and an increase in expectation as re-opening commenced which could easily account for these small reductions. Bucking that trend slightly, the proportion of people who felt better equipped to address issues themselves in the future is marginally up at 69% from 68.2%. Overall, these figures suggest a maintenance of standards.

We report overall numbers of compliant and non-compliant businesses at this point in the year, without the district breakdown. 98.8% of businesses were graded 3 star to 5 star on the hygiene rating scheme but this is again based on a small sample as the Food Standards Agency roadmap back to normal food controls does not commence with formal visits until September.

Compliments outnumber complaints by around 4:1 (161:42) very similar to last year.

Staff sickness is at 0.87 days per FTE, which is above last year's figure for this period of 0.61 but very similar to the 0.85 days per FTE from the same period in 2019. It has to be remembered that many controls remained in place during quarter 1 in 2020 so, as we said at the time, this figure has to be considered exceptional. Hopefully this year's figure is another sign of us returning to more normal work and behaviour patterns. This figure again includes additional temporary staff taken on for pandemic response.

Contact Points

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Background Papers

Appendix A: Activity Report (separate document)
Appendix B: Performance indicators Table



Appendix B: Performance indicator table

Table of PIs 2020/21

Indicator	Reporting period	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4/ Outrun
1. % of service requests where resolution is achieved to customers satisfaction	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	71.3			
2. % of service requests where resolution is achieved to business satisfaction	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	96.8			
3. % businesses broadly compliant at first assessment/ inspection	Annually	98.8			
4. % of food businesses scoring 0,1 or 2 at 1 st April each year	Annually	1.2			
5 % of drivers licence renewal applications issued within 5 working days of receipt of a complete application	6-monthly	NA		NA	
6 % of vehicles found to be defective whilst in service Number of vehicles found to be defective by district and the percentage this represents of the fleet county-wide	6-monthly	NA		NA	
7 % of service	Quarterly	69			



	requests where customer indicates they feel better equipped to deal with issues themselves in future	NB: fig is cumulative				
8	Review of register of complaints/compliments	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	5/ 12			
9	Annual staff sickness absence at public sector average or better	Quarterly NB: figure is cumulative	0.87			
10	% of staff who enjoy working for WRS	Annually	NA	NA	NA	
11	% of licensed businesses subject to allegations of not upholding the 4 licensing objectives	6-monthly	NA		NA	
12	Rate of noise complaint per 1000 head of population	6-monthly	NA		NA	
13	Total income expressed as a % of district base revenue budget (16/17)	6-monthly	NA		NA	
14	Cost of regulatory services per	Annually	NA	NA	NA	



head of population (Calculation will offset income against revenue budget)					
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