

## WRS Board

Date: 18<sup>th</sup> November 2021

### Title: Activity and Performance Data Quarter 2 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 second 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 second quarter of 2021/22 saw us leaving the Covid control regime completely with government replacing statutory controls with basic guidance on what business ought to do. Businesses are required to have regard to the advice given because of their responsibilities under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 but because the guidance is not statutory guidance under the Act, officers are limited as to what they can now ask. More details of this will be covered in the report on Covid related activity that the Board will receive at the meeting when this report is also presented.

Quarter 2 saw the formal launch by the Food Standards Agency of its roadmap to restoring the provisions of the current food control regime. A timetable has been set that required councils to address businesses of a particular risk by a particular date, with April 2023 being set as the final date by which all relevant businesses would have been visited (the lowest risk ones being left out of the re-start programme,) and a new approach to food law enforcement would be introduced. The Agency is currently running pilots for Food Standards (Trading Standards function in Worcestershire,) and will be talking in more detail to unitary and district councils about a



potential new approach in the coming months.

The number of food safety cases recorded by WRS during quarter two is an increase of 37% compared to quarter one. It is also a significant increase compared to previous years. Based on the 234 complaints recorded, 84% related to products purchased from food premises, whilst 16% related to hygiene standards and practices. Also, of the 342 interventions conducted during quarter two at premises included in the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS), 30 were rated as non-compliant (0, 1 or 2). Approximately 73% of these ratings were issued to takeaways or restaurants. At almost 9% of the businesses visited, this might cause some concerns given we usually see over 95% compliance levels, however officers are targeting the highest risk businesses first so one would expect slightly higher numbers of 0-2 rated premises. Also, as members will see from the table in the appendix, these failures are having a limited impact on the overall rates of compliance.

The number of health and safety cases recorded by WRS during quarter two is an increase of 30% compared to quarter one. It is also a notable increase compared to previous years. Approximately 37% of cases were reports of accidents; with 49% relating to injuries where a worker is incapacitated for more than seven days. The remaining cases related to injuries to members of the public, accidents where major injuries were sustained and a single dangerous occurrence. Last year saw an increase in accidents, beginning in Q2 and running into Q3 before declining into Q4. It will be interesting to see if we have a similar pattern this year.

The number of licensing cases recorded by WRS during quarter two is an increase of 4% compared to quarter one. A reduction in the number of complaints and enquiries was offset by a 19% increase in the number of applications. Approximately 63% of cases recorded were applications and registrations; with 30% relating to private hire and hackney carriage vehicles, 17% relating to temporary events, and 8% relating to personal licences. Performance in terms of turning around driver renewals is reported below and was excellent this quarter.

In general terms, WRS receives a higher number of enquiries about licensing matters than complaints about licensed or unlicensed activity. Based on the 151 complaints recorded during quarter two, 31% related to taxis, 30% related to alcohol and entertainment, and 19% related to animal licensing. This pattern, with around 80% of complaints and enquiries relating to these 3 areas seems quite constant now.

The number of planning enquiries completed by WRS during quarter two is a reduction of 15% compared to quarter one, but is broadly consistent compared to previous years. Approximately 90% of enquiries were consultations, while 45% related to contaminated land. A fifth of planning enquiries were completed, on a contractual basis, on behalf of other local authorities. This reduction is quite welcome given how busy the team has been, however work remains on a generally upward trajectory when the trend is taken into account. We will see if the respite continues into Q3.

In spite of the high workload, the Technical Services team has recently



found time to update its technical guidance note for planning applicants, agents and consultants which ensures that developments are undertaken to the highest standards with regard to environmental protection and the delivery of sustainable and desirable homes across the County.

The number of pollution cases recorded by WRS during quarter two is an increase of 36% compared to quarter one. It is also a significant increase compared to previous years, but is consistent with seasonal variations. Approximately 35% of the cases related to domestic noise, whilst 26% related to noise from commercial premises (including hospitality premises). A further 14% of the cases related to smoke nuisance and the burning of domestic or commercial waste. Smoke nuisance remained an issue during the summer, presumably as people disposed of garden waste rather than visiting household recycling centres. There were a few issues with some building sites burning materials, the public are unaware that this is permitted in relation to natural products like waste wood or materials like brushwood cleared from sites as long as the site registers with the Environment Agency.

As members will see, noise features strongly again and it now seems reasonable to conclude that, whilst some noise is new, for example where some pubs are trying out live music for the first time, much of the increase is down to the public having acclimatised to a somewhat quieter environment during the pandemic control period. The large increase in numbers in this work area has created significant pressure and we have had a backlog of complaints to address. It seems likely that this is the reason for the fall in non-business customer satisfaction this quarter.

The number of public health cases recorded by WRS during quarter two is an increase of 13% compared to quarter one. Approximately 60% of the cases related to pest control; whether enquiries about treatments and sewer baiting, or complaints about pest control issues caused by the activity of neighbouring residents or businesses. A further 16% of cases were complaints relating to accumulations at domestic properties.

Of the 249 domestic treatments undertaken during quarter two, the largest proportion at 49% were due to the presence of wasps, and overall 67% of treatments were in relation to properties located in the Wychavon or Redditch districts.

### **Covid related activities**

Are covered in a separate report this quarter.

### **Performance**

The non-business customer measure at 63.5%, significantly down on the last quarter and on the 74% out-turn from last year. Having reviewed the data, the falls have occurred against the questions relating to speed of response and speed of resolution. This is almost certainly linked to the backlog of nuisance work the team was dealing with during the summer. In spite of attempts, it proved impossible to bring in additional staff resource to support this work area as most of the agency Environmental



Health resource is already committed to the pandemic response. Officers have explained the reasons for delays but clearly this has had a negative impact on perceptions of the service. Likewise, numbers who felt better equipped to deal with future issues was also down at 60.8%.

Business customer satisfaction remains good at 97.7%.

Overall numbers of compliant and non-compliant food businesses were at 98.6% and 1.4% respectively. This remains good and on a par with previous years. As we have said above, the focus currently is on those higher risk businesses that have historically had a low score. Hence, the overall change is limited as these businesses are more likely to have been part of the 1.4% at their last intervention.

If seen, a significant fall in these measures would suggest our better performing businesses had let standards slip and we are not likely to know this until much further into the process of re-starting the inspection programme, assuming of course that this is the case. It may well be that such businesses have been able to maintain standards or will be able to re-establish them ahead of being visited.

Generally, compliments outnumber complaints by around 3 or 4 to 1 and so far this year is no different (15:52). In this quarter, one complaint relates to an animal licensing inspection of a premise, another relates to a food business unhappy at its Food Hygiene rating, and some to the time taken to respond to nuisance issues, however the other complaints have been about Covid Advisors and mainly the difficult job around establishing if someone is self-isolating when infected. Officers do try to be diplomatic when looking at this but obviously sometimes people do get upset at the fact someone has come to check, although this only occurs from a WRS perspective, when someone has failed to respond to a number of telephone calls from either the national or our local contact tracing teams. The compliments about Covid Advisors and other members of the team still far outweigh the complaints so members can be happy that, on balance, our role as either enforcers or advisors is performed in a thoughtful and sympathetic way, wherever it can be.

Performance on processing complete driver license renewals was at 100% for all authorities. This is great work by the team. Members should remember that we are reliant on those applying providing us with the required data necessary to process applications. Some fail to do this, in spite of being informed of requirements. These applications either remain pending or are returned to the applicant who would be asked to re-submit once they have all of the required information.

As ever, the number of defective vehicles found whilst potentially in service was relatively small at 13, which is a small proportion of the total fleet, which post Covid sits at 1435. Hopefully, now that the council garages and others that deliver the vehicle tests are operating with more capacity, we should be able to return to normal reporting on this measure. Members may remember we had to suspend this measure at one point as garages were closed or not offering all services. More



details appear in the table in appendix 1.

Members may have seen recent national press coverage regarding falls in the numbers of licensed drivers and vehicles on the road. Councils across Worcestershire have seen some falls in numbers of vehicles although not to the extent reported elsewhere. Looking back, the fall during the Covid pandemic is probably around 100 vehicles as numbers do fluctuate over time, with some variations between districts.

Staff sickness has increased from 0.9 days per FTE to 1.55 days per FTE cumulative for the year. A very minor IT glitch has meant these figures needed updating but in WRS's case the change had little impact. Current sickness levels are higher than last year (0.95,) but lower than the figures for 2019/20 (2.91,) and 2018/19 (2.77) at the same point in the year.

The rate of noise complaints against population is 1.08. This is above the rate at the same point in the previous 2 years (0.94 and 0.85 respectively,) and heading towards the previous high in 2018/19 (1.7, although a quiet Winter meant overall this year was on trend.) This clearly indicates a return to normal or above levels, suggest 2021/22 may be a busy year for nuisance issues, especially as the spike continued into the Autumn. This supports officers anecdotal view that people have become less tolerant of noise following the relative quiet of the pandemic period.

The rate of hospitality businesses not upholding the 4 licensing objectives is 6.7%. This is significantly above the previous three years' figures at this point (4.3%, 4.9% and 2.8% respectively.) Whilst one or other district hitting above 8% at this point is not unusual, Redditch had a similar figure in 2020/21, it is unusual for the lowest district to be over 5%. In the previous 3 years this was 3%, 3.6% and 2.4% respectively. This again supports officer's anecdotal view that more premises are trying new things like live music to bring people in, combined with the fact that people have enjoyed the quiet that the pandemic controls brought to their localities.

Income brought in during the first half of 2021/22 is £163,583, which is significantly up on last year that this point (£131,901) and at a similar level to the figure quoted at the end of September 2019 (£163,534.) Using the historic budget figure for 2016/17 (£3,017,000) to maintain the comparison with previous years, this comes out at 5.4%. Hopefully this shows we are starting to see more normality returned in the areas that generate our income streams.

## Contact Points

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## Background Papers

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

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Table of Pls 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	63.5%		
2. % of service requests where resolution is achieved to business satisfaction	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	96.8	97.7		
3. % businesses broadly compliant at first assessment/ inspection	Annually	98.8	Bromsgrove 99.6% Malvern Hills 98.8% Redditch 98.1% Worcester City 98.7% Wychavon 98.2% Wyre Forest 98.3% <b>Worcestershire 98.6%</b>		
4. % of food businesses scoring 0,1 or 2 at 1 <sup>st</sup> April each year	Annually	1.2	Bromsgrove 0.4% Malvern Hills 1.2% Redditch 1.9% Worcester City 1.3% Wychavon 1.8% Wyre Forest 1.7% <b>Worcestershire 1.4%</b>		
5 % of drivers licence renewal applications issued within 5 working days of receipt of a complete application	6-monthly	NA	<b>100%</b>	NA	
6 % of vehicles found to be defective whilst in service Number of	6-monthly	NA	13 = 0.91% of 1435 vehicles on the road county-wide	NA	



vehicles found to be defective by district and the percentage this represents of the fleet county-wide			BDC 1 MHDC 0 RBC 7 WC 4 WDC 1 WFDC 0		
7 % of service requests where customer indicates they feel better equipped to deal with issues themselves in future	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	69	60.8		
8 Review of register of complaints/compliments	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	5/ 12	15/52		
9 Annual staff sickness absence at public sector average or better	Quarterly NB: figure is cumulative	0.90 days per FTE	1.55 days per FTE		
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	Bromsgrove 5.2% Malvern Hills 5.6% Redditch 5.5% Worcester City 8.0% Wychavon 6.7% Wyre Forest 8.2% <b>Worcestershire 6.7%</b>	NA	
12 Rate of noise complaint per 1000 head of population	6-monthly	NA	Bromsgrove 0.67 Malvern Hills 0.69 Redditch 1.23 Worcester City 1.55 Wychavon 1.05 Wyre Forest 1.15 <b>Worcestershire 1.08</b>	NA	
13 Total income expressed as a % of	6-monthly	NA	£163,583, which is 5.42% as a proportion of the 2016/17 revenue	NA	



district base revenue budget (16/17)			budget figure (£3,017,000)		
14 Cost of regulatory services per head of population (Calculation will offset income against revenue budget)	Annually	NA	NA	NA	

