

## WRS Board

Date: 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2022

### Title: Worcestershire Regulatory Services Annual Report 2021/2

#### Recommendation

That the Board note the Annual Report for 2021/22 and agree that a copy be forwarded to each Chief Executive of the 6 partner authorities and to the wider elected member base in their areas.

#### Contribution to Priorities

Not applicable

#### Summary

Under the Worcestershire Shared Services Partnership Service Level Agreement, the Head of Worcestershire Regulatory Services and the Lead Finance Officer for the host authority, Bromsgrove District Council, are required to submit to the Joint Board an annual report that covers the performance of the shared service and provides a summary of the finances. This report covers the period from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 to 31 March 2022. If endorsed by the Joint Board, a copy will be forwarded to each Chief Executive of each member authority and the authors would request that members use their usual channels within their authorities to distribute the report to the wider elected member cohort.

#### Report

Under Clause 11 of Part 1 of the Shared Services Partnership Agreement, the Joint Board is required to receive a report at its annual meeting which will be held no later than 30 June. The report covers the period from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022. The annual report is co-signed by the Head of Worcestershire Regulatory Services and the Lead Financial Officer for the Host Authority as required by the legal agreement.

The report covers the performance of the service for that period, both in terms of KPIs and highlights of activity, a short summary activity report appearing at Appendix 5. This has been reduced somewhat as the Committee receives a separate Activity Data report, which covers these aspects in much more detail. Some detail of the performance indicators has also been covered in the Activity Data Report.



Last year continued to be dominated by the global Covid 19 pandemic, which required a significant resource input from WRS. The service took on several new work-streams to support pandemic response and delivered these well. This has however, meant that some areas of work were more limited during 2021/22, one example being the Food Standards Agency's work programme, which recommenced last September via their road-map back to a "new normal" scheduled for 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023.

Despite these additional commitments, performance has remained good in most areas. Food business compliance rates remain high. Taxi license renewals have been dealt with in a reasonable time in the main. The taxi fleet appears to be generally in good order, although the number of vehicles that failed either when submitted to a garage for interim test or, to a lesser extent, whilst in-service has increased, with one partner area standing out.

As with previous years, complaints against the service are significantly exceeded by compliments. The main issues for complainants related to people:

- Unhappy with our response to their complaint about nuisance,
- Having pest controller issues
- Unhappy with Covid Advisor advice

Last year, many people were suffering from "Covid fatigue," so it is not surprising that being reminded about some of the covid controls was not always welcome. None of these complaints were founded. Other complaints are unavoidable because of the nature of the law, being related to people's expectations of what could be delivered.

However, with non-business customer satisfaction at only 66.5%, managers do realise they need to start to move forward on improving speed of response, speed of resolution and keeping people updated on progress. The nature of the service is such that we will never be able to make everyone happy because a significant proportion of nuisance complaints will not amount to a statutory nuisance, but we know that we can improve our performance in this area.

The indicators for licensed premises and noise complaints have been in place long enough now for us to establish good baselines. The former, linked to the Crime & Disorder agenda, demonstrates what we have previously said to members, that post pandemic lockdowns where hospitality premises were closed for long periods, the general tolerance of noise and similar activities from this type of premise has reduced. This, combined with businesses seeking other activities and use of their outside spaces to increase revenue, has resulted in increased levels of complaint. It is therefore not surprising to see an increase for all districts in this measure.



It still shows that over 90% of premises across the County are well run and controlled by their operators, and the increase has not led to an increase in licensing revues either by residents or responsible authorities, including the police, suggesting that, in general complaints tend to be about relatively minor issues, although we know there are one or two premises where residents have strong concerns.

The figures can now be used, along with intelligence, to focus enforcement resources proactively, to tackle any individual problem premises, although these are relatively few and most complaints relate to nuisance issues or anti-social behaviour, which is a police matter.

The rate of noise complaints indicator has some links to the licensed premises one, although most nuisance complaints relate to domestic neighbour issues, not problems with business premises. Although rates in Worcester and Redditch are up slightly, the figures are still within the range seen previously.

The Annual Report also gives a summary of the financial position, the key achievements and covers issues relating to human resources. There are also sections on risk management and equalities. The Report will be published on the WRS website and will be shared with other partners e.g., Worcestershire LEP. A press release will be sent out to accompany the publishing of the report. Putting the report into the public domain meets the requirement in the Regulators Code, made under the Regulatory Enforcement and Sanctions Act 2008, which requires local authorities to publish summary information about their regulatory activities each year.

## **Financial Implications**

The financial implications are contained within the Annual Report.

## **Contact Points**

Simon Wilkes, Head of Worcestershire Regulatory Services  
Tel: 01562-738088,  
email: [simon.wilkes@worcsregservices.gov.uk](mailto:simon.wilkes@worcsregservices.gov.uk)

## **Background Papers**

WRS Annual Report 2021/22

