

WRS Board

Date: 23rd June 2022

Title: Activity and Performance Data Quarters 1, 2 3 and 4 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 final 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 final quarter of 2021/2 followed on from a Christmas period free of Covid controls and Government continued to move away from controls, with all restrictions removed at the end of the period

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) had announced its plan to commence its roadmap to normal operations during the Summer of 2021, and this commenced in September, increasing demands on a still stretched team that was continuing to juggle Covid controls and particularly Local Outbreak Management work. A creditable 1718 interventions were completed during the year, with over 500 in Q4. The numbers of complaints about food continued a slight up-tic from Q3 through Q4, although following the trend predicted previously.

There was a slight fall in complaints and enquiries from Q3 through Q4 on Health and Safety at work, although overall numbers for the year were up on the figures for 2020/21. Accident reports were also higher than last year and going back to 2019/20.

Q4 followed the slow downward trend we have seen this year in relation to



dog related complaints and enquiries, however, the number of strays reported over the year was up and above levels pre-pandemic in 2019/20. The latter is a slight concern as officers have predicted an increase as people who purchased dogs during lockdowns return to the workplace.

Numbers of licensing applications fell slight from Q3 to Q4, although overall numbers for the year are above the previous year but have yet to return to the level pre-pandemic. 20% of applications were for temporary events as the hospitality industry sought to recover from the impacts of pandemic controls. Of the 466 complaints received last year, 36% related to the taxi trade and 20% related to alcohol licensed premises, with 19% relating to animal establishments.

Quarter 3 into 4 saw planning application numbers fall. The number of planning enquiries completed by WRS during the year is an increase of 4% compared to 2020/21, but a reduction of 2% compared to 2019/20. Approximately 91% of enquiries were consultations, whilst 48% related to contaminated land. Members are reminded that handling of planning enquiries is one of our areas of significant income generation and just under a quarter of planning enquiries were completed, on a contractual basis, on behalf of local authorities outside of the County. Information requests, often associated with the planning and development process also continued an upward trajectory throughout Q4.

Following the drop from the summer peak through Q3, Q4 saw a slight increase in numbers of nuisance complaints despite the Winter weather. The number of pollution cases recorded by WRS during the year is a reduction of 3% compared to the very high levels of 202/21, but an increase of 22% compared to 2019/20. Case totals, however, were broadly consistent with seasonal variations. This may suggest that people are becoming more used to what one might call normal environmental background activities that may have ceased during the earlier part of the pandemic. Approximately 70% of cases related to noise nuisances, with noise from domestic properties (such as from dog barking or noise from audio visual equipment) the most prominent sources. A further 14% of cases related to smoke nuisances and issues such as the burning of domestic or commercial waste.

For much of this year, officers continued to deliver Covid pandemic controls as well as our business-as-usual activities, but this year was effectively a transition so, by 31st March, all controls had been lifted. The service has remained engaged with the County Council Public Health team as the Local Outbreak Response team is maintained in a reduced form to respond to the continuing issues with Covid and to be prepared to re-vamp up activity should a more dangerous, novel variant emerge. There is no further financial commitment to covid control activity from Government for 2022/3 so this is very much a year where accommodating life with Covid 19 is the norm and people will continue to return to pre-pandemic behaviours or establish new ones as we move to the oft quoted “new normal.”

Covid related activities

Covid related activities continued through the final quarter of 2021/22



with WRS EHOs still being embedded within the Local Outbreak Response Team and remaining busy supporting business to deal with or prevent outbreaks. Out of hours enforcement activities continued with officers regularly undertaking pro-active work in evenings and at weekends to check on the night-time economy, looking at potential covid related issues but also much of our business-as-usual regulation around food, noise nuisance and licensing.

Covid Advisors were out daily mainly supporting the vaccination drive. Clinics occurred in most districts, with local ones being set up in many areas to provide access for those harder to reach groups. Figures consistently showed lower uptake in our more deprived communities and those with a higher proportion of residents from ethnic minorities. The Advisors delivered several roles in support of these very successful exercises. Contact tracing and lost to follow-up activity continued through the period until Government finally ended the need for this towards the end of the quarter.

Performance

The year was mixed from a customer satisfaction perspective with the business customers level continuing to be high at 98.4%, but the non-business customer measure at 61.6%. This is a significant fall on the end of last year (74%,) and below the previous two (69.5%, 63%,) This is disappointing and likely relates to how stretched the service was during the re-opening process as, at a time where there was not capacity available to backfill the on-going pandemic response, officers had to try to deal with the high levels of nuisance demand and other activities. Scores were low for initial response times and the time taken to resolve issues. This almost certainly influenced people's responses to other questions used to assess overall performance. Managers will have to return to the approach used in previous years to ensure initial response times improve and that expectations on timely resolution are set from the beginning. Clearer communication and officers maintaining agreed contact intervals with complainants may improve this situation. Whilst we will never achieve 100% satisfaction because of the nature of our work, we know we can do better than this. People who felt better equipped to deal with issues ended the year at 58.5%, well below the 68.2%, of the previous year but marginally above the 58.1% that it was the year before that.

The figures for licensing processing are good with the year ending at 97.5% of taxi driver renewals completed within 5 working days. Numbers of vehicles suspended is, however significantly higher than previous years. As members will see from the detail, much of this increase is driven by a single fleet, although most districts have slightly more vehicles being either taken of the road during stop-checks or, being failed by local garages when vehicles are presented for their routine tests. This may well simply reflect the post-covid economic climate, and it is somewhat worrying given the other financial pressures that the trade is likely to face with current cost of living pressures.



Numbers of compliments and complaints are down on the previous 2 years, but the ration remains good at above 4:1. Staff sickness is up at 5.2 days per FTE. This includes additional temporary staff taken on for pandemic response. This is at the high end of our average and has been pushed up by planned hospital admissions and long-Covid. Given the pressures under which everyone has operated for the past 2-years, one might expect to see a slight increase, and managers feel this is not a concern at this stage.

Staff satisfaction was at 97.5%, an excellent result given the pressures, with 61/79 staff who responded scoring the service as 8/10 or better to work for. Further work will be done during the year to look at more detailed feedback.

The proportion of businesses licensed under the 2003 Act (alcohol and entertainment,) allegedly not uphold the 4 licensing objectives is higher than previous years in most of the districts. As we have explained to members previously, 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, combined with businesses seeking other activities and use of their outside spaces to increase revenue. It is therefore not surprising to see an increase for all districts in this measure. It still shows that 90% plus of premises across the County are still well run and controlled by their operators, and this increase has not led to an increase in licensing revues either by residents or the responsible authorities, including the police.

Looking at figures for the rate of noise complaint per 1000 head of population, last year saw variations in impacts, with Bromsgrove and Malvern being slightly below average numbers and Wychavon and Worcester slightly above. This will, to some extent be linked to the issues identified above with hospitality, however it should be remembered that most noise complaints are domestic, neighbour issues. It still suggests however, that overall, the environment for Worcestershire residents is good.

Income is back to pre-pandemic levels at over £449,000. Although some of this is related to management support for covid functions, it is a good sign of things moving towards normality. This represents 14.89% of the budget from 2016/17, which we have used for comparison over the years and 13.8% of the current budget.

The overall cost of the service, therefore, is also slightly down on last year at £4.80 per had of population compared with over £5.00 last year, due to the improved income.

Contact Points

David Mellors, Community Environmental Health Manager
01562 738060
david.mellors@worcesterservices.gov

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	63.5%	62.5	61.6
2. % of service requests where resolution is achieved to business satisfaction	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	96.8	97.7	97.9	98.2
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% Worcestershire 98.6%	98.3	Bromsgrove 99.3% Malvern Hills 98.4% Redditch 97.5% Worcester City 98.4% Wychavon 98.2% Wyre Forest 98.6% Worcestershire 98.5%
4. % of food businesses scoring 0,1 or 2 at 1 st 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% Worcestershire 1.4%	1.7	Bromsgrove 0.7% Malvern Hills 1.6% Redditch 2.5% Worcester City 1.6% Wychavon 1.8% Wyre Forest 1.4% Worcestershire 1.5%
5 % of drivers licence renewal applications issued within 5 working days of receipt of a complete application	6-monthly	NA	100%	NA	97.5%
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	13 = 0.91% of 1435 vehicles on the road county-wide BDC 1 MHDC 0 RBC 7 WC 4 WDC 1 WFDC 0	NA	59 = 4% of 1457 vehicles on the road county-wide BDC 3 MHDC 0 RBC 37 WC 8 WDC 6 WFDC 5



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	50	58.5
8	Review of register of complaints/compliments	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	5/ 12	15/52	18/113	25/134
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	2.94 days per FTE	5.2 days per FTE
10	% of staff who enjoy working for WRS	Annually	NA	NA	NA	97.5%
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% Worcestershire 6.7%	NA	Bromsgrove 5.9% Malvern Hills 5.1% Redditch 9.5% Worcester City 10.0% Wychavon 6.3% Wyre Forest 9.1% Worcestershire 7.5%
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 Worcestershire 1.08	NA	Bromsgrove 2.25 Malvern Hills 2.29 Redditch 3.47 Worcester City 2.47 Wychavon 2.45 Wyre Forest 2.65 Worcestershire 2.9
13	Total income expressed as a % of district base revenue budget (16/17)	6-monthly	NA	£163,583, which is 5.42% as a proportion of the 2016/17 revenue budget figure (£3,017,000)	NA	£449,356, which is 14.89% as a proportion of the 2016/17 revenue budget figure (£3,017,000) and 13.8% of the 2021/22 budget (3,257,000)



14 Cost of regulatory services per head of population (Calculation will offset income against revenue budget)	Annually	NA	NA	NA	£4.80
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