

WRS Board

Date: 29th June 2023

Title: Activity and Performance Data Quarters 1, 2 3 and 4 2022/23

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 2022/2023, 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 service moved into the final quarter of 2022/3 knowing that this would be the last period where Covid grant funding would have any influence on activities. With Government support ending on 31st March, our final vestiges of input into the Local Outbreak Response Team would cease and full normality would be restored. There remained, however, several workstreams where covid staff had been redeployed to deliver successful support to the partners.

The service has continued to address the Food Standards Agency's (FSA) recovery plan as part of its activity this year. A creditable 1,657 interventions were completed across the year. Of those businesses included in the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS), 69 were rated as non-compliant (0, 1 or 2) with most of these ratings issued to takeaways, restaurants, and small retailers.

As members will see, food safety cases have been running below the trend line for virtually all this year. This represents a reduction of 28% compared to 2021-22, and a reduction of 2% compared to 2020-21. In general terms, a higher proportion of food safety cases are enquiries such as requests for

business advice or export health certificates. Of the 473 food complaints recorded, 74% have related to issues with products purchased from food businesses, whilst 26% have related to poor hygiene standards and practices. The team has continued to work closely with the Trading Standards team throughout the year due to the split of responsibilities between county and districts for food standards and food hygiene.

Both complaint numbers for health and safety and reported accidents, fell from Q3 to Q4. Overall numbers this year show a reduction of 21% compared to 2021-22 but are consistent with 2020-21. Approximately 39% of cases relate to accidents, with 49% of these involving injuries where a worker was incapacitated for more than seven days. Some 32% related to injuries to members of the public. The remaining cases were either accidents where major injuries were sustained, including several fatalities, or dangerous occurrences. Slips, trips, and falls continues to be the most prominent cause of accidents.

Q4 saw the continued slightly downward trend in stray dog numbers following the trend we had seen earlier this year. Numbers in relation to dog related complaints and enquiries, however, did increase from Q3 through Q4. Overall, the number of stray or lost dogs recorded by WRS during the year still represents an increase of 25% compared to 2021-22, but an increase of 26% compared to 2020-21. Approximately 62% of stray cases related to 'contained' stray dogs, which means that a dog was found and held by, for example, a member of the public. Overall, 63% of contained strays were reunited with their owners, however, figures vary significantly between local authorities.

With complaints, WRS receives a relatively low number related to dog control. Of the 91 complaints recorded, 57 have related to fouling and persistent straying, 19 have related to dangerous dogs, and 15 have related to welfare concerns.

There was a slight uptick in Licensing complaints and enquiries during Q4, but the number of applications was down. This is typically seasonal as the post-Christmas period tends to be slightly quieter for the various trades and generally Q1 of each year sees an increase in workload. Overall, the number of licensing cases recorded during the year represents a reduction of 2% compared to 2021-22, but an increase of 21% compared to 2020-21. It should be noted, however, that there were significantly fewer licensing applications recorded two years ago due to COVID restrictions and the closure of many hospitality premises. Approximately 68% of cases have been applications and registrations; with 28% relating to private hire or hackney carriage vehicles, 26% relating to temporary events, and 16% relating to driver licences.

WRS continues to receive a higher number of enquiries about licensing matters rather than complaints about licensed or unlicensed activity. Based on the 532 complaints recorded, 40% have related to taxi licensing, 23% to alcohol licensing, and 22% to animal licensing.

Quarter 3 into 4 saw the continued slow increase in requests for support on planning applications that began after Q1, following the drop off in numbers

last year. Hopefully, this is a continued sign of development moving back to normality too, although numbers do remain lower than in previous years. Overall, the number of planning support enquiries completed by WRS during the year represents a reduction of 24% compared to 2021-22, but a reduction of 19% compared to 2020-21. Approximately 89% of enquiries have been requests for support with planning consultations, whilst 52% have related to contaminated land. Around 16% of enquiries have been completed, on a contractual basis, on behalf of other local authorities.

Nuisance complaints have followed their long-established seasonal pattern, so following the drop from the summer peak through Q3, Q4 saw an increase in numbers despite it being Winter. The good weather during February may account for some of this increase as people were tempted outside earlier than they may have otherwise. Overall, the number of pollution cases recorded during the year represents a reduction of 11% compared to 2021-22, but a reduction of 14% compared to 2020-21. It should be noted, however, that the increased number of cases two years ago coincides with COVID-19 restrictions and a greater number of residents being at home. Approximately 70% of nuisance cases related to noise nuisances, with noise from domestic properties such as noise from dog barking or audio-visual equipment being the most prominent sources. A further 12% of nuisance cases related to smoke nuisances and issues such as the burning of domestic or commercial waste.

This year saw the gradual withdrawal of Covid support funding, to the point where, in Q4, only a limited commitment to the Local Outbreak Response Team remained. However, several additional workstreams came into being during the year, supported by some of our former covid staff, redeployed to continue to provide successful service to the partners

Homes for Ukraine

Support continued to be provided to Bromsgrove, Malvern Hills, Redditch and Wychavon through quarters 3 and 4 with the provision of the Homes for Ukraine scheme. This has involved host and guest checks, support and guidance as well as facilitating appropriate payments. This was completed utilising staff formerly employed as COVID Advisors. At the end of quarter 4, this work ceased for Wychavon and Malvern but continued for the other two partners.

Planning Enforcement

In Bromsgrove and Redditch, former Contact Tracing and Enforcement staff have been utilised to support planning colleagues in tackling a backlog of planning enforcement issues. Most of these cases are live and going through the enforcement process. The work has, so far, been well received.

Performance

The year was mixed again from a customer satisfaction perspective with the business customers level continuing to be high at 98.1%, but the non-business customer measure at 59.2%. This is a small fall compared to the end of last year (61.6%,) and below the previous three (74, 69.5%, 63%.) This is again related to how stretched the service was during the

Summer where there was limited capacity available to respond to nuisance complaints with the continued draw on resources to meet Food Standards Agency road-map requirements for visits with the limited capacity in the system to back-fill with agency staff. A more detailed review of scores is provided in the Annual Report, but we can say that using our Regulatory Support Officers enabled us to improve our initial response score but in other aspects like usefulness of the contact and providing final resolutions to problems, scores were less positive than in previous years. This year's figures were also not helped as we attempted again to shift people from our paper satisfactions forms to electronic responses. As in previous years, this resulted in a significant fall in the number of responses, so this year's figures are only based on comments from 138. In better scoring years we would expect 200-250 responses. 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 57%, slightly below the 58.5% and 58.1% of two of the previous three years, but well below the 68.2%, of 2-years ago.

The figures for licensing processing are good again, 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 all districts had slightly more vehicles being either taken off the road during stop-checks or, being failed by local garages when vehicles are presented for their routine tests. This is likely to be a reflection the current economic climate, with cost-of-living pressures continuing to impact on members of the trade. However, members should remember that the safety of the travelling public is paramount in their role as the licensing authority.

Numbers of compliments and complaints are down on the previous 2 years, but the ratio remains good at around 4:1. As has been mentioned elsewhere, we tried a digital approach to getting customer feedback this year, which resulted in fewer responses, so fewer compliments.

Staff sickness is down at 2.93 days per FTE. This includes all staff on our books during the year and is a significant improvement on last year (5.2 days,) and below the 5-year average including 22/3 (3.71 days.)

Staff satisfaction was at 92%, slightly lower than last year but still an excellent result given the pressures 48 of our staff cohort responded, which was a little disappointing, but two-thirds of staff who responded scoring the service as 8/10 or better to work for, which shows the majority of staff do like working in the environment we provide. Further work will be done during the year to look at more detailed feedback.

48 of our staff cohort responded to the survey. Most have returned to normal duties over the year, but a few additional staff are retained for work on projects like Homes 4 Ukraine and the planning enforcement pilot. As ever, some did not respond to all the questions. The satisfaction

score is based on those who scored 5/10 or better for the question in the staff survey which asked, are you satisfied with working with WRS (score is from 0 to 10.) The figure obtained, of 92% is slightly lower than last year but remains excellent. Around two-thirds of staff who responded scored working for WRS at 8 or better out of 10, which is good news.

The proportion of businesses licensed under the 2003 Act (alcohol and entertainment,) allegedly not uphold the 4 licensing objectives presents a slightly mixed picture this year. We previously explained to members that, after pandemic lockdowns where hospitality premises were closed for long periods, the general tolerance of noise and similar activities from this type of premise seemed to have reduced, so as these businesses sought other activities and uses of their outside spaces to increase revenue, this made residents living in the vicinity unhappy. This appears to be slightly less prevalent for last year, with our more urban districts, returning figures around average and our more rural districts returning figures at average or slightly higher. It still shows that 90% plus of premises across the County are still well run and controlled by their operators, and we know from interactions with Police colleagues that concerns tend to be limited to smaller numbers of premises.

Looking at figures for the rate of noise complaint per 1000 head of population, the rate for Malvern Hills is low compared to previous years and numbers for other areas appear around average to slightly below average. Domestic noise represents more than half of complaints and, as we have alluded to in Activity Data Reports, noise from dogs and from audio devices remain key drivers of this. With commercial premises it tends to be a small number of these that certain residents have concerns about, and things like a change of DPS in a pub and the business looking at more diverse ways of bringing in revenue can lead to friction with the local community. Overall, it still suggests however, that the environment for Worcestershire residents is good.

Overall income was good and income from non-partner sources was over £384,000. This represents 12.73% of the budget from 2016/17, which we have used for comparison over the years.

The increases in both salaries and hosting costs incurred, plus some modest some investments in areas like additional funds for gull control in the City and the continuous analyser purchased for Wychavon at Wychbold, have pushed up the overall spend by the partners. Therefore, the cost per head of population is up this year at £5.51 per head of population. As we have said previously, it is difficult to compare our costs with others because of the way the service is delivered, however we are sure this spend is comparable or modest compared to similar areas for the functions discharged.

Contact Points

Mark Cox, Technical Services Manager
01562 738023
Mark.Cox@worcsregservices.gov

Background Papers

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

Appendix B: Performance indicator table

Table of Pls 2022/3

Indicator	Reporting period	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4/ Outrun
1. % of service requests where resolution is achieved to customers satisfaction	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	55.6	54.1	57.9	59.2
2. % of service requests where resolution is achieved to business satisfaction	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	98.7	98.6	98.2	98.1
3. % businesses broadly compliant at first assessment/ inspection	Annually	98.4	Bromsgrove 99.2% Malvern Hills 97.9% Redditch 97.0% Worcester City 98.9% Wychavon 97.6% Wyre Forest 98.4% Worcestershire 98.2%	98.2	Bromsgrove 99.3% Malvern Hills 97.8% Redditch 97.1% Worcester City 99.0% Wychavon 97.6% Wyre Forest 98.5% Worcestershire 98.3%
4. % of food businesses scoring 0,1 or 2 at 1 st April each year	Annually	1.6	Bromsgrove 0.8% Malvern Hills 2.1% Redditch 3.0% Worcester City 1.1% Wychavon 2.4% Wyre Forest 1.6% Worcestershire 1.8%	1.8	Bromsgrove 0.7% Malvern Hills 2.2% Redditch 2.9% Worcester City 1.0% Wychavon 2.4% Wyre Forest 1.5% Worcestershire 1.7%
5 % of drivers licence renewal applications issued within 5 working days of receipt of a complete application	6-monthly	NA	98%	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	6-monthly	NA	37 = 2.37% of 1562 vehicles on the road county-wide BDC 3 MHDC 1 RBC 25 WC 2 WDC 1 WFDC 4	NA	84 = 5.4% of 1546 vehicles on the road county-wide BDC 5 MHDC 4 RBC 47 WC 11 WDC 7 WFDC 10

	fleet county-wide					
7	% of service requests where customer indicates they feel better equipped to deal with issues themselves in future	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	46.7	45.9	54.9	57.0
8	Review of register of complaints/compliments	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	8/23	19/37	24/72	28/116
9	Annual staff sickness absence at public sector average or better	Quarterly NB: figure is cumulative	0.90 days per FTE	1.79 days per FTE	2.44 days per FTE	2.93 days per FTE
10	% of staff who enjoy working for WRS	Annually	NA	NA	NA	92%
11	% of licensed businesses subject to allegations of not upholding the 4 licensing objectives	6-monthly	NA	Bromsgrove 2.2% Malvern Hills 1.3% Redditch 1.3% Worcester City 2.8% Wychavon 3.8% Wyre Forest 3.5% Worcestershire 2.7%	NA	Bromsgrove 7.2% Malvern Hills 4.1% Redditch 8.1% Worcester City 8.5% Wychavon 8.2% Wyre Forest 9.5% Worcestershire 7.6%
12	Rate of noise complaint per 1000 head of population	6-monthly	NA	Bromsgrove 0.97 Malvern Hills 0.76 Redditch 0.91 Worcester City 1.14 Wychavon 0.69 Wyre Forest 1.04 Worcestershire 0.91	NA	Bromsgrove 2.26 Malvern Hills 1.93 Redditch 3.09 Worcester City 3.40 Wychavon 2.07 Wyre Forest 2.75 Worcestershire 2.57
13	Total income expressed as a % of district base revenue budget	6-monthly	NA	£232,520, which is 7.7% as a proportion of the 2016/17 revenue budget figure (£3,017,000)	NA	£384,185 which is 12.73% as a proportion of the 2016/17 revenue budget figure (£3,017,000)

(16/17)					
14 Cost of regulatory services per head of population (Calculation will offset income against revenue budget)	Annually	NA	NA	NA	£5.51