

Worcestershire
Regulatory Services

Supporting and protecting you

Activity Report | 2022-23



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Foreword

Welcome to the final activity report for 2022/3. It follows the format you will all now be familiar with and covers the period 1st January to 31st March 2022, but the graphs and tables allow comparison with the data in previous quarters and years.

Stray dog numbers fell slightly during quarter 4, but remained at high levels. Complaints increased in the same period.

Progress continued with the FSA's Food Recovery programme with a significant number of interventions in Q4, lower than the same period last year but still significantly contributing to the recovery programme. Food complaints appeared to plateau. Activity on Health and Safety at Work fell slightly but we continue to have a number of on-going investigations into fatalities on the service's books.

Licensing work remained on an even keel through the quarter, at levels close to what would be anticipated. Information requests were up, possibly reflecting the increased levels of demand for planning responses, to which that area is often linked.

Pollution and nuisance complaints followed their usual seasonal upward trend from their low point at the end of Q3. The size of the increase this quarter may be linked to the relatively good weather in the earlier part of the quarter.

We hope the report demonstrates the volume of work staff are undertaking and that some of the stories behind the numbers highlight the difficulties staff sometimes face. If you have further queries, please feel free to contact myself and the Team Managers.



S

Head of Regulatory Services

Quarter One

The Community Environmental Health Team were kept incredibly busy throughout quarter one across the whole range of environmental health work.

Tragically we received a report in respect of a fatality at a white-collar boxing event which we are investigating in close collaboration with the Coroner's Office. Additional ongoing health and safety investigations include an accident involving a vehicle hitting an employee on private land in Kinver, whereby we had to detain the vehicle for examination, and a prosecution file has been submitted to Legal Services in respect of a serious forklift truck incident at a major retailer.

Your Officers resolved a significant private water supply issue in Timberhonger, providing support to the UK Security Health Authority in providing notices to residents on elevated Arsenic levels. Officers worked hard with landlord to resolve the issue, getting the water tested and implementing a regime for regular testing.

The Team attended, and in some cases chaired, Safety Advisory Groups throughout the period to ensure public safety including those convened for the Commonwealth Games Queens Baton Relay throughout the County.

In nuisance work, WRS worked with a car wash in Pershore in meeting its undertaking in respect of works to resolve a noise problem. We were also able to provide expertise in advising a local business in preventing light nuisance to residents where a film company was using their premises to film at night. We continued to receive a significant number of complaints concerning pubs having live music events in their gardens, often where they were fundamentally unsuitable for such events due to the proximity of neighbouring residential premises. We adopted a proactive intelligence-led approach to monitoring various large-scale events planned through the summer and served abatement notices in respect of noise from fans in Evesham, a cockerel crowing at a café in Bromsgrove, noise from barking at kennels and odour nuisance in Ombersley linked with a Planning enforcement notice. Another cockerel case made the national press, appearing in "The Sun", where we had been able to intervene and resolve the case.

A landowner in Worcester was served with a notice in respect of controlling rats and a Simple Caution was issued in respect of a long-running nuisance case involving barking dogs in Worcester. We also dealt with disturbance from a warehouse rave, carried out a BS4142 noise assessment on an industrial company in Evesham and investigated smoke nuisance from a business directed to burn tomato plants by The Animal and Plant Health Authority in Throckmorton.

A sad case involved the case of a deceased gentleman who had been resting with a Worcestershire Funeral Director for several months. We were contacted as conditions were getting very difficult for the staff and, for the dignity of the deceased, a funeral was needed. The situation was that money could not be released from the Estate and the daughter was abroad and unable to act. Your Officer intervened under the Public Health (Control of Diseases) Act 1984, and we were able to make the appropriate arrangements.

In food safety work, we were able to deliver 729 Inspections of which 185 were "first time" as we continued to focus on the Food Standards Agency Post Pandemic Recovery Programme which commenced in August 2021 and runs to March 2023.

Private Water Supplies and Drainage

Our private water supplies specialist, who holds Drinking Water Inspectorate accreditation for water sampling, is currently undertaking sampling for a neighbouring local authority as part of our income generation work. Your Officers have been liaising with Seven Trent Water regarding several problems with odour from sewage pumping stations, including some which are yet to be adopted as part of major new housing developments. We are also in the process of obtaining a warrant to access premises in Redditch where it is suspected that sewage is leaking from their system into a neighbouring basement, where the occupier has refused us access.

Infection Control

The team continue to liaise with Public Health to ensure preparedness for any Covid-19 seasonal surge which may increase demand on the service to deal with outbreaks and potentially public health funerals.

Nuisance

The team is currently dealing with appeal against a noise abatement notice served on premises in Wyre Forest relating to noise from dogs barking at a kennels. The hearing, in the Magistrates Court, will be heard in December. We are also working with licensing colleagues to investigate whether there is breach of a Noise Abatement Notice served for excessive barking from kennels located in Wychavon, which resulted in a residents meeting being arranged to explore the issues involved.

Notice under the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act has been served on premises at Rose Hill, Worcester, in relation to a rat infestation. Should action not be taken by the owner to put things right, then remedial works can be carried out by the service in default.

Several complaints have been received concerning smoke/odour from newly installed log burners at domestic premises around the county. It is believed that these may be driven by the rise in fuel costs, and the situation is being monitored to establish if this is going to become an increasing problem.

Food Safety

184 new food registrations were received between July and September and the sector remains very volatile, with 390 premises having closed over the same period. Your officers made a total of 535 food safety interventions during the period and two Appeals were received challenging the Food Hygiene Rating Score (FHRS) awarded, one of which was upheld by your Food Lead. In income generation work, 21 Food Export Certificates were issued and 9 FHRS re-rating requests were received.

Two Hygiene Emergency Prohibition Orders were served during the quarter and ratified by magistrates, one on a food producer in Bromsgrove for production in an unsuitable and hidden food room and one on a business in Malvern for generally dirty conditions and another hidden food preparation room. Prosecution files are in preparation for these cases. Two other enforcement files for serious non-compliances are being prepared, relating to businesses in Malvern Hills and Redditch districts.

Your officers are spending considerable time in supporting businesses with allergen compliance, particularly in respect of cross contamination risks in kitchens, which continues to present challenges to many food businesses across the county and falls to Environmental Health to deal as a food safety matter. There is also joint activity with Trading Standards on wider aspects of allergen controls.

The ongoing financial crisis is impacting on businesses and where they receive a poor FHRs score, there are signs of an increase in requests for re-rating visits. If a food premises gets a FHRs Level 0 (the lowest) they are automatically removed from platforms such as “Just Eat”.

Businesses scoring Level 0 to Level 2 continue to attract press interest as they are published on the national website. Reports of officer visits are also releasable under the Brand Standard and do not require a Freedom of Information request. These two factors are assisting us in ensuring that improvements are made as poor ratings affect trade. The Food Lead can refuse to re-rate premises with serious contraventions for up to three months during which time they must demonstrate that they are able to comply over a reasonable period. For other businesses the average revisit is made within two weeks.

WRS continues to play an active role in national activities related to food safety. Your Food Lead is now Chair of the Primary Authority Expert Panel for the Hospitality sector which is supported by BEIS. The Food Standards Agency is also beginning to reach out to local authorities about a review of The Food Law Code of Practice into how interventions are done, but it is unlikely there will be major changes to the current ways of working until 2024. WRS continues to blaze the trail in respect of the use of intelligence to drive its intervention programmes.

Health and Safety

The team is being kept very busy with some complex and challenging health and safety accident investigations, some of which have involved fatalities and close liaison with West Mercia Police. More details of these can be shared once they have progressed through the legal process.

WRS officers have also been instrumental in the process of ensuring that the professional Worcester Warriors Premiership rugby team could fulfil their home fixtures by working with the safety officer at the club to maintain the General Safety Certificate for Sixways as the club unfortunately passed into Administration. This Safety at Sports Grounds work is carried out on a contract basis by WRS on behalf of Worcestershire County Council who have the legal responsibility for issuing safety certificates. Our ongoing work secures events being held safely at Sixways Stadium.

It is worth noting that all the work described in this section is carried out by a single multi-disciplinary Community Environmental Health team, with professional officers supported by their line managers balancing all of these competing demands across an extensive and challenging range of subject areas.

In Quarter 3 we have chosen to highlight some of the intelligence-led health and safety investigations that we are currently conducting on your behalf. These are often complex and very resource intensive. Partners have not funded a health and safety programme of inspections for some years, but the intelligence-led approach adopted by WRS provides for a robust and efficient targeting of resources and interventions to ensure that Partners continue to meet their statutory obligations.

During the reporting period WRS received a report of a work-related accident from the management of a local warehouse. The injured employee was closing an electrically powered roller shutter door. As the door descended it came into contact with a roll of industrial cling film which had inadvertently been propped up in the door channel by another member of staff. This caused a loop of cable to come out of its housing which became entangled around the arm of the door operator who simultaneously pressed the upward travel door control. This caused the cable loop to tighten, lifting the operator from the floor. He consequently sustained an arm injury. The company were subsequently served with three Improvement Notices under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act, which were complied with within the set timescales. More rigorous and frequent safety checks were introduced, and key employees were provided with refresher health and safety training.

A further tragic incident gave rise to the death of a nine-year-old boy at a four-by-four off roading centre which came to the attention of WRS inspectors following notification from the local police. On this occasion the father of the boy was attempting to drive his Land Rover up a steep hill when its engine is believed to have stalled. The car, which contained two adults in the front and three children in the rear then began to slide down the incline. As it did so it became unstable, apparently hitting a tree and rolling several times. It is believed that the boy was thrown from the vehicle sustaining fatal injuries. The accident is currently being investigated by the police (who retain primacy) with support from WRS Officers.

Your Officers continue to work with the Coroner's Office and West Mercia Police in respect of a fatality during a white-collar boxing event. Informations have been laid for the prosecution of a well-known retail chain in respect of a nasty injury involving a forklift truck in collision with a member of the public, and investigations continue into a serious accident involving an escalator at a popular county shopping centre.

In other work, the service was subject to an appeal in respect of a noise abatement notice served on the operators of Northwood Farm. A full day trial took place with the appellants employing a barrister. This was a challenging case, but WRS were successful, the notice being upheld by the Court.

Officers have noted an unusually high volume of service requests in respect of nuisance for the time of year, with spikes before and after Christmas. A high proportion of these relate to barking dog complaints, including several from kennels/boarding establishments. Notice has also been served in relation to motocross events being held at land near Feckenham. Breaches of the Notice are being investigated with a view to further formal action being taken.

With regards to our events work, WRS Officers presented the Safety at Sports Ground Annual Review to October's Worcestershire County Council Planning and Regulatory Committee. Officers have issued a Special Safety Certificate for Six Ways' Firework Display and conducted checks of the food vendors attending Worcester's Victorian Fayre. WRS facilitated Safety Advisory Groups for Bromsgrove Sporting Football Club and The Three Counties Agricultural Showground and Officers have attended counter terrorism training.

In the seemingly less glamorous but equally important world of public health, your Officers dealt with a bed bug problem at rented premises in Worcester, the tenant inadvertently importing them within second-hand furniture that he was re-selling. The pests subsequently made their way into the neighbouring private house, believed to be through the party wall through a vent in the chimney flue. The team has seen an upturn in requests for public health funerals, the number of rodent complaints being received is increasing, and Officers have received several service requests in respect of septic tanks.

Together with the Food Safety Information Report accompanying this briefing, Members will appreciate the breadth of work currently being carried out by your Community Environmental Health Team.

Your team continued its food recovery programme with 229 food hygiene interventions being undertaken in Q4, with 97% resulting in a compliant or better rating being issued.

However, where unsatisfactory standards were found, swift remedial action was taken. A Bakery trading from Callow Hill House, Callow Hill, Rock, DY149XD was issued a level 0 food hygiene rating on 24/01/2023 due to an inadequate food safety management system, poor standards of cleaning, a lack of staff training, inadequate food storage and pest control issues. Notices were subsequently served to secure the required improvement.

Food hygiene Notices were served on premises in Wychavon where the takeaway was found to have an inadequate food safety management system and on a coffee house found to have an inadequate food safety management system and lack of staff training.

Premises in Stourport received formal Notices due to a lack of staff training, inadequate hot water supply, pest control issues and lack of electrical and gas certificates.

Officers have an ongoing investigation into premises in Redditch which prepared a meal for an employee who subsequently suffered an anaphylactic shock, and also investigated an accident in Redditch where two members of the public fell down an escalator and sustained minor injuries. Remedial action has subsequently been taken by the business.

Kennels trading in Wychavon breached a noise abatement notice by failing to prevent noise from barking dogs at the premises. The business is moving to new premises and is now providing regular updates on the relocation process.

Abatement notices were served in respect of noise from an illegal motorcycle track in Redditch and barking dogs in Bromsgrove and Wyre Forest. Notices were also served in respect of drainage issues in Redditch and Wychavon and pest issues in Worcester City.

Improvement Notices were served on a leisure centre in Wychavon following complaints and an investigation into poor swimming pool conditions.

Quarter One

The first quarter of every year always sees a steady increase in applications and this quarter has been no different with an increase in TENs applications leading the way as usual this time of year closely followed by taxi licensing.

The team are out doing more visits than ever before in all areas of licensing and this has illustrated where more resource have been allocated and more so in certain areas rather than others. These compliance visits will continue throughout the remainder of the year. Caravan licensing inspections have reached the second phase of the project with the majority of less contentious sites across Wychavon and Worcester City now being visited. There have been scheduled Taxi checks undertaken across the County and some in partnership with the County Council and officers are still finding problems with vehicles. The team will be looking to do more communication activities with the trade on the back of this. Animal licensing inspections have also peaked with officers now looking at the interim inspections that are required to be undertaken within the duration of a licence.

Within Taxi Licensing the Taxi Standards work has continued and the team are working with various suppliers to agree a provider for the 'Competency Certificate' whereby new drivers will undertake a suite of training as required under the new guidance.

Licensing officers have also commenced their annual training sessions for Members across all districts with more training to be provided later in the once the Taxi Standards have been implemented.

The increase in summer events have seen the licensing team dealing with an increase in TENs applications and therefore we have increased capacity in the team to deal with these and cover the teams annual leave over the summer. You will see all other applications have started to slowly dip as they have done so in previous years around this time and this usually starts to increase again around the end of Quarter 3.

The Licensing team successfully implemented the Taxi Standards across all six districts with all new drivers from the 1st September 2022 now undertaking the new competency certificate delivered by Worcestershire County Council. There were mop up sessions held for applicants that were already in the system and had not completed the various elements required by each district prior to this date.

Phase 3 of the Caravan project commenced and these are the more problematic sites where officers have not had a lot of historic contact with the site owners so they will be visited by officers to ensure compliance. The project has flagged some very well run sites across the two districts but also some very contentious ones where planning colleagues have required involvement. The long term aim is to have all officers trained in doing inspections so any issues can be dealt with quickly and efficiently.

Animal Licensing inspections continue with an increase in unregulated activity and complaints taking up more officer time. With the regulations now being in implementation since 2018 there is a lot of work being undertaken by managers across the Country in liaison with external stakeholders to re-look at the legislation, guidance and the wider ramifications of its introductions with a view to making changes. With this in mind the focus of the team has now been on how officers can streamline the process. There continues to be intelligence led project work on Illegal dog breeding and work with the intelligence team has continued to develop this since the spike during covid. The team also had their first appeal lodged at the First-Tier Tribunal against a refusal of an Animal Activity Licence.

Quarter 2 saw an increase in the number of sub committees being held with officers preparing reports and information with a very unusual high number of 11 sub committees in Worcester City alone just for this quarter. There have been a number of complex and contentious premises reviews in the north and officers have been preparing reports and information for committee members to consider.

Licensing applications continue on an upward trajectory this quarter compared to the same time pre-covid levels so the team remain busy especially processing TEN applications and answering queries around the Licensing Act and Taxi applications. Alongside the processing of applications the team have been working on numerous projects outlined below, Committee work and enforcement activity across the County.

The caravan project that commenced earlier this year has now come to an end with all three phases now complete. All sites that required inspections across Worcester City and Wychavon have now been inspected and any advice provided will be followed up by officers. Overall site owners have been very co-operative and engaged well with the team.

As part of the teams licensing review strategy there has been a full review of the Animal Licensing Process and a project group will be set up next year to look at how improvements can be made to incorporate all the lessons learnt from Operation Lisbon which looked at illegal dog breeding cases but also taking into account that the current animal licensing legislation and guidance implemented in 2018 is being reviewed nationally therefore the team would like to be at the forefront of those conversations sharing learning and advising on best practice.

Once again officers supported the Victoria Fayre with both environmental health and Worcester city colleagues which involved the team carrying out licensing and enforcement related activity over the whole three days and supporting the event organisers as and where the teams skillset was required.

Enforcement activity has continued across the County using a combination of both complaint and intelligence data to deploy resource accordingly. This has included joint taxi enforcement with West Mercia in both Redditch and Worcester City looking at both driver etiquette and vehicle checks. Officers have also worked with civil enforcement officers in Worcester City in the night time economy carrying out taxi enforcement.

As part of the WRS strategic priorities workstreams the Night Time Economy (NTE) project has commenced and the team are assessing the work areas that have fallen out of a NTE priorities workshop and these will be looked at in more detail next quarter.

The Licensing team have seen a small decrease in applications towards the end of this quarter however queries and complaints remain consistent with some being more complex and taking longer for officers to investigate.

There has been an increased level of proactive inspections and compliance checks across the County this quarter with officers undertaking a range of operations including vehicle checks, Night Time Economy Visits to ensure compliance of taxis and licensed premises, inspections of gambling premises and more work around vehicle checks at the Council's identified garages. Some of this work has been undertaken by many of our partner agencies including West Mercia Police, trading standards colleagues, Worcester Bid and colleagues at Crossgates Garage.

The team have continued to work with all District Councils to implement methods for the introduction of electric vehicles as part of their wider council carbon neutral agenda and we will continue to look at the best approach for their fleet taking into account the make-up of their current fleet and the age criteria policy of each council. Some of these options have included discussions around changing the age criteria of the fleet of vehicles licensed alongside implementing incentives for drivers to move to electric vehicles.

Each Council's Gambling Statement of Principles were reviewed and approved by each district last year and following this a comprehensive plan was rolled out to undertake Gambling inspections across all six districts. Work has commenced on the Local Area Gambling Profile Refresh which is coming up to 5 years old so this will be available to see in the next financial year. The majority of the premises inspected by officers (betting shops, adult gaming centre and Bingo premises) were very well managed and compliant with licence conditions, staff were well informed and the required safer gambling measures all in place. The premises inspected were on the whole part of national chains so lots of internal measures and management were set out by the company/head office.

Quarter One

Information Management

Quarter one is particularly busy for our Information Management and Database Administration team with the preparation and submission of most of the service's government returns. Much of the day to day activity has been focused on increasing security and resilience of our systems. This has included include regular updates and patches to our main back office system, facilitating the recall of all laptops and mobiles for security updates, and promotion of cyber security awareness for all staff. In addition the team continues to help to support the income generation target of the service by delivering paid for services to Bromsgrove and Redditch Council's Planning Department, Worcestershire County Council Trading Standards and Tewkesbury Borough Council's Environmental Health & Licensing teams.

COVID Advisors

With no COVID restrictions in place the work of supporting the public and businesses with COVID recovery was continued through the first quarter of this year. This supporting Environmental Health colleagues providing advice and guidance to businesses through low level food hygiene inspections where compliance had been adversely impacted by the pandemic and to residents affected by nuisance where businesses had sought to change their operating methods to comply with restrictions or adapt to public demands post COVID. On the 20th April COVID advisors assisted with the Vaccine pop up clinic in Worcester where there was an uptake of 90 vaccinations, and also at further clinics in Worcester on the 7th May with an uptake of 71 Vaccinations and 28th May with an uptake of 12 vaccinations.

With COVID funding due to come to an end, a process of diversification was undertaken to enable the team to utilise their skills in engagement and contribute towards the service's income generation targets by providing meaningful assistance to our Partner authorities with the Homes for Ukraine scheme. Advisors, have been carrying out safeguarding checks for the guests arriving from Ukraine for Bromsgrove and Redditch during this period.

Enforcement Team

During quarter one of this year, we have been utilising former contact tracing staff with enforcement skills and knowledge to complement our existing service provision and enable us to widen it by assisting Bromsgrove, Malvern Hills, Redditch, and Wychavon Planning Enforcement teams. For Bromsgrove and Redditch, we have been delivering the vast majority of the service delivery deploying a range of investigative and enforcement tools to assist with COVID-backlogs and skills, knowledge and experience shortages. The work is exceptionally varied, ranging from unauthorised changes of use to breaches of permitted development rights and for Redditch and Bromsgrove areas will continue for the rest of the year.

Information Management and Database Administration

In addition to our normal workload, we worked with Wyre Forest IT to plan and then re-equip our office in keeping with our agile working approach. Most desks now have a simplified and more efficient docking system for laptops, which just requires single cable to connect. This move to mainly using laptops will reduce the duplication of devices and licences we use to reduce costs. We have continued to support the WRS budget with providing support services to Bromsgrove and Redditch Development Control, Worcestershire Trading Standards and Tewkesbury Borough Council's Environmental Health and Licensing teams.

The WRS website is continually developed to support our self-service options and has included accessibility checks. During this last quarter we have been running our annual website review, where our webpage content is reviewed and updated where necessary. This is a key component of our ability to enable self-service and provide appropriate advice and resources with the aim of reducing customer demand on our phone line and email traffic. As you would expect, over the quarter we have taken part in various activities designed to increase the security and resilience of the computer system we use and activity reduce our vulnerability to cyber attacks. These activities include regular updates and patches to our main back office system, record retention and deletion, and cyber security awareness for all staff.

Former COVID Advisors

From the 6th July the remainder of the COVID Advisors joined in the efforts to help assist with the Homes for Ukraine Scheme and support our Partner Authority colleagues. Three part time Advisors assisted with Safeguarding and welfare checks for the scheme in Redditch and Bromsgrove areas and two full time Advisors assisted with property checks for the scheme in Wychavon and Malvern Hills areas. With currently 75 hosts in Bromsgrove, 46 in Redditch, 180 in Wychavon and 140 in Malvern (and with more being added each week) our District colleagues have been under pressure and on a cost recovery basis we have been supporting the work to ensure the impact on wider service delivery has been minimised. The team have enjoyed being able to support the scheme but there have been some complex and challenging cases, which is understandable given the on going situation in Ukraine and the uncertainties for both hosts and visitors.

Dog Warden Service

During the last quarter, the dog warden service has sadly seen more strays being picked up in poor condition and needing more veterinary care. It is likely the cost of living crisis is already having an impact on the ability of the wider public to care for their dogs, as evidenced in the dogs we are seizing. We have picked up numerous welfare dogs, some with broken legs, open wounds, sores, sarcoptic mange, infected ears and eyes and an awful lot with matted fur. It is assumed that the increased cost of veterinary and grooming care with reductions in disposable income means dog owners are struggling financially and can no longer afford to get them the care needed. Wider impacts of the cost of living crisis may also be being seen with an increase in requests for assistance in rehoming/handing over dogs that are no longer wanted due to domestic violence, hardship and owners needing to rehome their dogs in emergency situations where they are having to seek refuge and cannot take their pets with them.

Information Technology

As well as our day to day work, we have been involved in additional work and testing with our host IT as we prepare to upgrade most of our servers we use for our back office systems, with the intention to increase the resilience and efficiency of these systems which are used to support all aspects of the work our service undertakes. This work is due to be completed in the next quarter.

We have continued to provide Uniform support functions and development for other local authorities. We currently do this for Bromsgrove and Redditch Council's Planning department, and for Tewkesbury Borough Council's Environmental Health and Licensing departments. This contributes towards income supporting the WRS budget, together with the work we do on behalf of Worcestershire County Council's Trading Standards.

Over the quarter we have taken part in various activities designed to increase the security and resilience of the computer system we use. These activities include regular updates and patches to our main back office system, record retention and deletion, and cyber security awareness for all staff.

We have been working with our host IT, as they prepare to move to a new web-based telephone system. This is due to be implemented in the next quarter.

Planning Enforcement

The planning enforcement team have been busy investigating suspected breaches of planning control throughout Redditch and Bromsgrove, 65 cases were referred to WRS between July and September. Officers have encountered a range of issues from unlawful advertisements to buildings without planning permission. We work closely with our partners across the two Councils and have investigated referrals made by the Housing Team, Councillors and members of the public.

A number of the cases passed to us require further enforcement action to bring them into compliance. It is important to note that enforcement action is discretionary and will only be deployed in cases where it is expedient and in the public interest to do so. Where we serve enforcement notices on behalf of the Planning Authority, landowners may choose to appeal the notice and as such any required action is held in abeyance. This can be frustrating as it appears no action is being taken however, the appeal process ensures a robust and transparent system is in place for all.

Former COVID Advisors (now support for Homes for Ukraine work)

The remaining Officers continue to support Bromsgrove, Malvern Hills, Redditch and Wychavon with the Homes for Ukraine work. The officers continue to support with the safeguarding and welfare checks, helping with the rematching/rehoming process where some host and guest pairings are coming to the end of their sponsorship or in the event of relationship breakdown. The Officers assisting in Bromsgrove and Redditch are also providing a lot of aftercare when the guests become independent moving into a private rental accommodation such as helping set up bills and finding local schools etc. With the large number of hosts across the four authorities with more being added each week, the workload is considerable but rewarding.

On 22nd December DLUHC announced that the £350 "thank you" payments will be extended from 12 months to 2 years, which means our officers through the partner authorities will be able to continue to support guests who are not yet ready to move into independent accommodation, enabling them to stay in sponsorship longer with an existing host or a new host. The current support arrangements for Bromsgrove and Redditch has now been extended till April 2024 with the Malvern and Wychavon arrangements due to end with this financial year.

Planning Enforcement

The planning enforcement team continue to be very busy dealing with suspected breaches of planning control in the Redditch and Bromsgrove areas. 104 cases were referred for WRS officers to investigate through the January to March period. The work load is varied and the team have dealing with several partner agencies including MATES (Multi Agency Targeted Enforcement Group), Police, housing Associations, Councillors, Planning Officers and members of the public. Cases range from windows replaced incorrectly in conservation areas to issuing enforcement notices for persons stationing and residing in caravans in the greenbelt. Our officers have a wide range of knowledge and experience with enforcement tools which is assisting with the investigation and enforcement of breaches of planning control identified. The team are also assisting Bromsgrove and Redditch Councils in reviewing and updating their Planning Enforcement policy, so the public and businesses are aware of the processes and procedures followed in our day to day conduct and what they can expect.

COVID Advisors (Homes for Ukraine Support Workers)

This quarter the former COVID Advisors continued to assist with the Homes for Ukraine scheme in Malvern Hills, Wychavon, Bromsgrove and Redditch districts. The work remains largely that of safeguarding and welfare checks, helping with the rematching/rehoming process. There are a significant number of hosts in all districts and the work of the former COVID Advisors is greatly assisting the teams in these districts to manage with the additional work the service brings. The assistance in Malvern Hills and Wychavon Districts ceased on 31st March 2023 with that in Bromsgrove and Redditch Districts continuing until at least March 2024.

Gull Control

Worcester City is the only Partner Authority where Gull Control activity is delivered, but significant preparations have been underway to ensure all contracts are in place ahead of the gull breeding season. Contracts for nest and egg removal, gull proofing and hawking were all signed this quarter. As the two species of gull of concern (Herring Gull and Lesser Black-backed Gulls) are protected species, any control has to be performed under licence. WRS have been fortunate to be granted a Organisational licence for the last couple of years representing a recognition of the robust processes and procedures that we have in place to ensure adherence to the legal requirements and our emphasis on non-lethal controls and comprehensive strategy of control. This has meant a significant amount of resource is required at this time of year to prepare evidence of harm and set out the detail of the measures making up our strategy of control in support of the licence application covering the coming year. Further information on gull control is available on the WRS website, or for a full review of the previous year's work and proposals for the following years which are presented to the Environment Committee each autumn, please see the Worcester City Council website (Committee meeting minutes section). Due to the experience and knowledge that WRS has developed in this specialism other local authorities have sought advice and under contract we deliver the gull control work and prepare the organisational licence on behalf of Bath and North East Somerset Council.

Dog Control

We are seeing increased numbers of older, poorly and welfare cases. There have been cases of Parvo (a highly contagious, serious disease which can be fatal to dogs) and we have sadly seen more dogs have to be put to sleep due to temperament and type. This is a decision we only take when the dog is deemed dangerously out of control and not suitable for rehoming into the public domain. The cost of living crisis is having a significant impact on animal charities and rescue shelters which has caused challenges in rehoming dogs swiftly after the statutory period and therefore reduces kennel availability.

Air Quality

On the 9th February, we were successful in our competitive bid to DEFRA and were awarded £248,400. Our project will look at enhancing our air quality monitoring across Worcester to provide real time data that can be used to drive local air quality policy, disseminate public health information and alerts about poor air quality episodes, and advise the public on interventions to reduce pollution and exposure levels. A specialist lead officer role was appointed for this area of work in March 2023 to lead this area of work to assist our ongoing work towards a Worcester City Air Quality Action Plan. Preparatory work also commenced on the sighting of a new Automatic Air Quality Analyser near Whybold. We also continued our NO2 tube replacement work and replaced a number of tubes across the County.

Contaminated Land

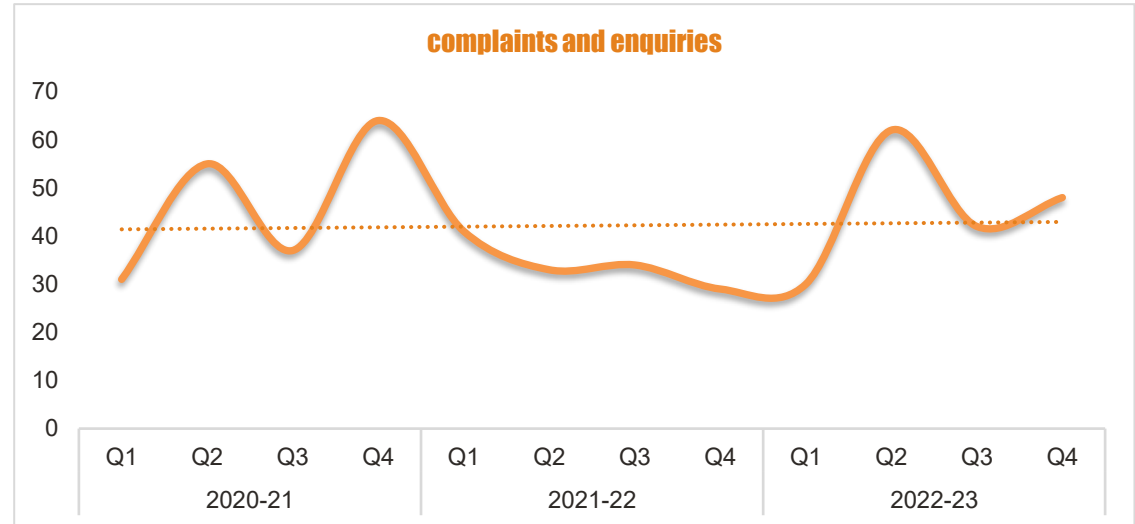
No update available for quarter four.

Dog Control

The chart (top right) shows the number of complaints and enquiries recorded by WRS over a three year period relating to dog control. Types of cases recorded under this category include fouling and persistent straying, dangerous dogs and welfare. The chart (bottom right) shows the number of dogs recorded by WRS as lost, found or seen straying.

The number of stray or lost dogs recorded by WRS during the year to is an increase of 25% compared to 2021-22, but an increase of 26% compared to 2020-21. Approximately 62% of 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.

In general terms, WRS receives a relatively low number of dog control complaints. Based on 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.



Environmental Permitting

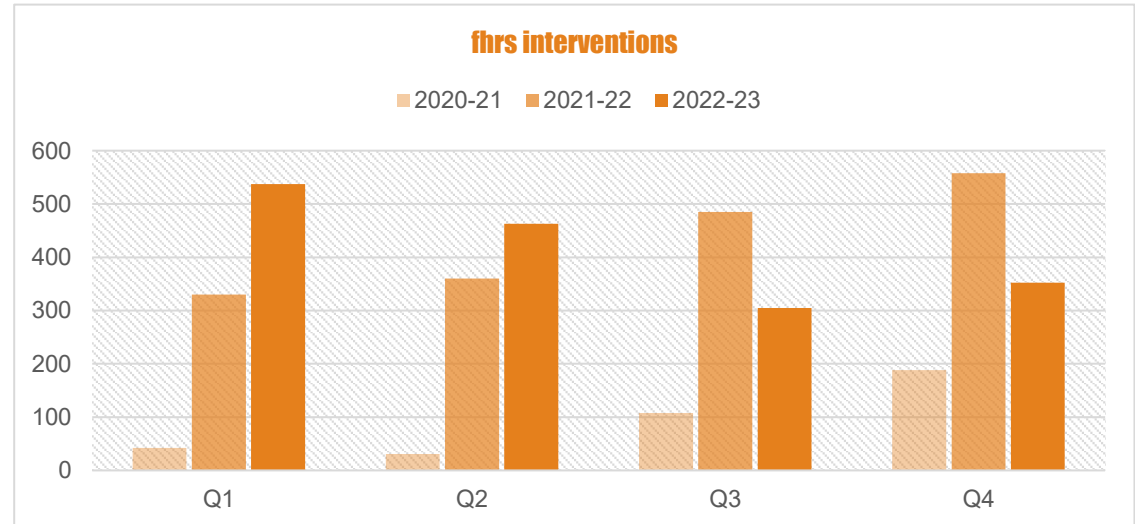
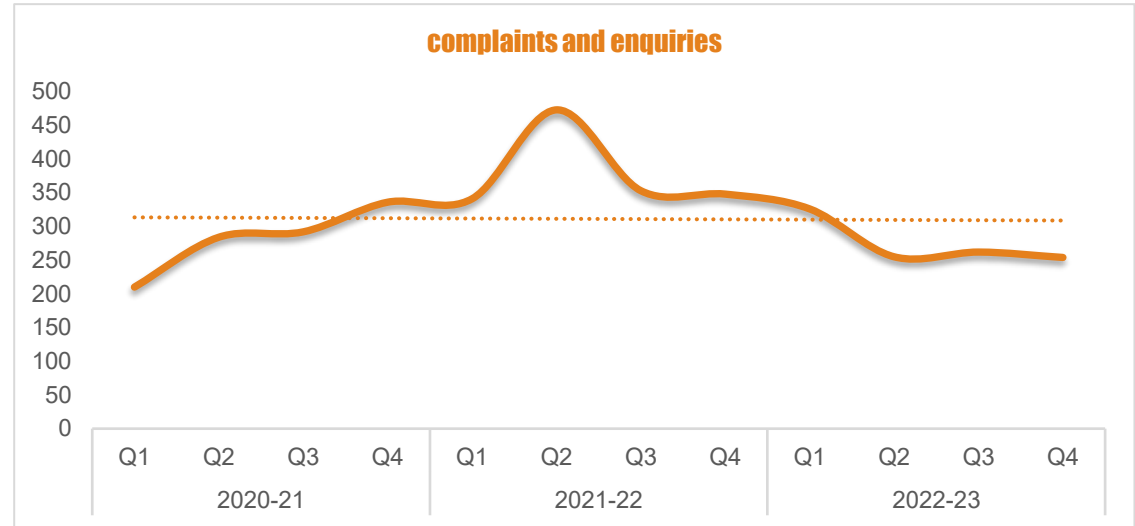
No update available for quarter four.

Food Safety

The chart (top right) shows the number of complaints and enquiries recorded by WRS over a three year period relating to food safety. Types of cases recorded under this category include complaints about food products, hygiene of premises complaints and requests for business advice. The chart (bottom right) shows the number of interventions conducted by WRS at premises included in the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme, commonly known as FHRS.

The number of food safety cases recorded by WRS during the year is 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. Based on the 473 complaints recorded, 74% have related to issues with products purchased from food businesses, whilst 26% have related to poor hygiene standards and practices.

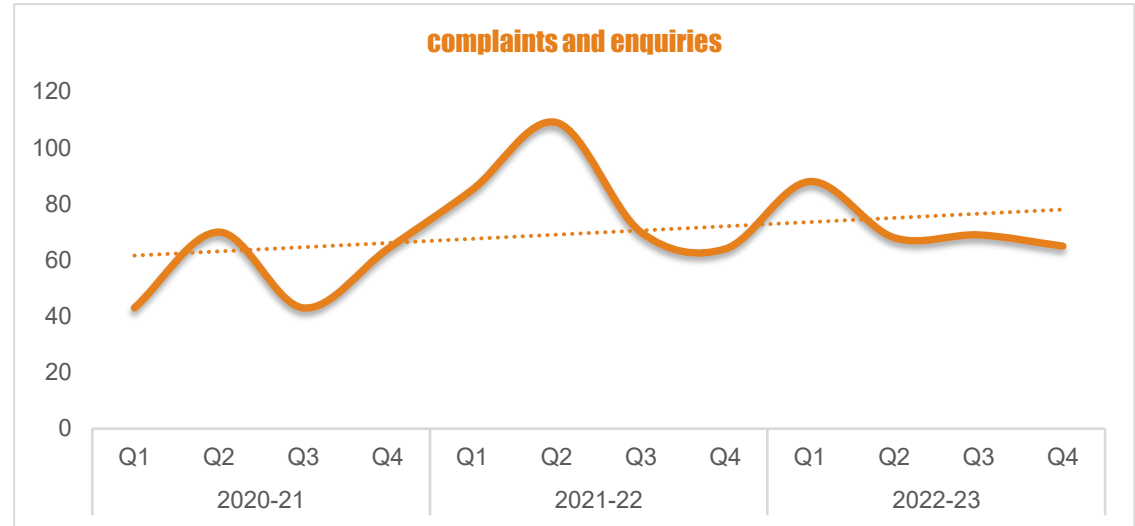
Of the 1,657 interventions conducted at businesses included in the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS), 69 were rated as non-compliant (0, 1 or 2) with most of these ratings issued to takeaways, restaurants, and small retailers.



Health and Safety

The chart (top right) shows the number of complaints and enquiries recorded by WRS over a three year period relating to health and safety at work. This includes requests for business advice. The chart (bottom right) shows the number of notifications received by WRS relating to accidents.

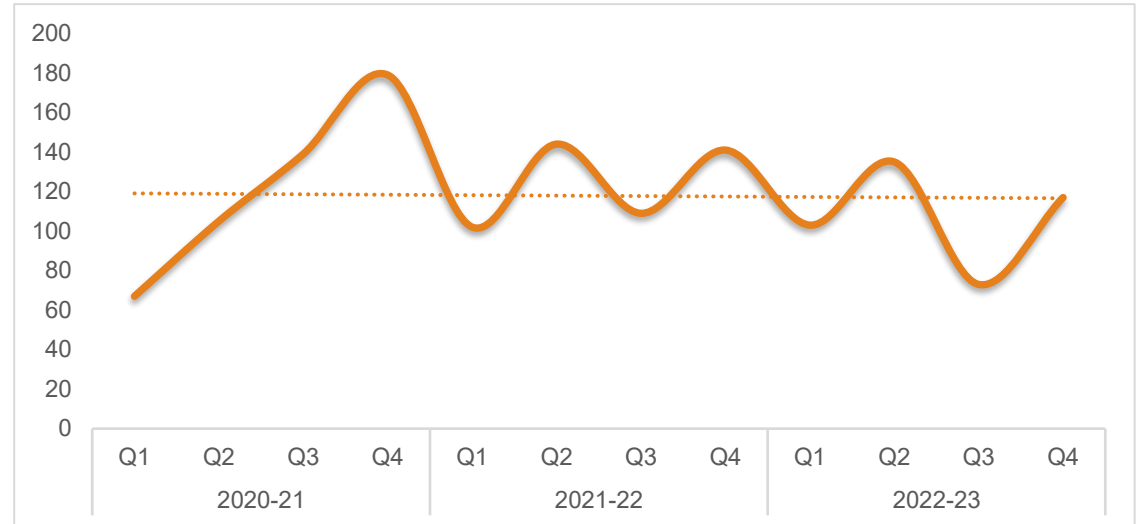
The number of health and safety cases recorded by WRS during the is a reduction of 21% compared to 2021-22, but consistent with 2020-21. Approximately 39% of cases have been reports of accidents, with 49% relating to injuries where a worker was incapacitated for more than seven days and 32% relating to injuries to members of the public. The remaining cases were either accidents where major injuries were sustained, dangerous occurrences, and two fatalities. Slips, trips, and falls continues to be the prominent cause of accidents.



Information Requests

The chart (right) shows the number of information requests recorded by WRS over a three year period. Information requests can relate to either the following;

- Environmental Information Requests
- Freedom of Information Requests
- Requests for information under the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)



Licensing

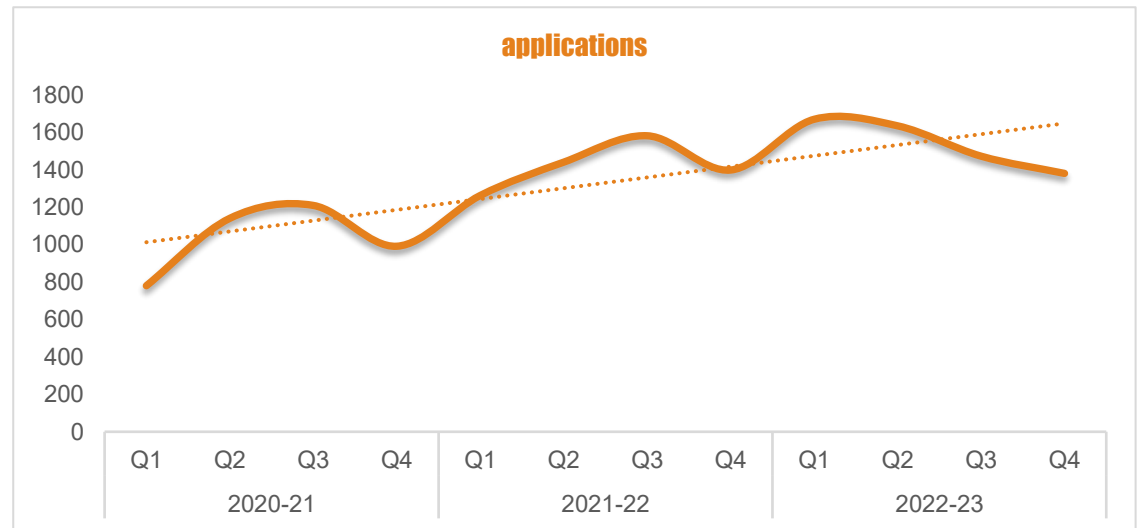
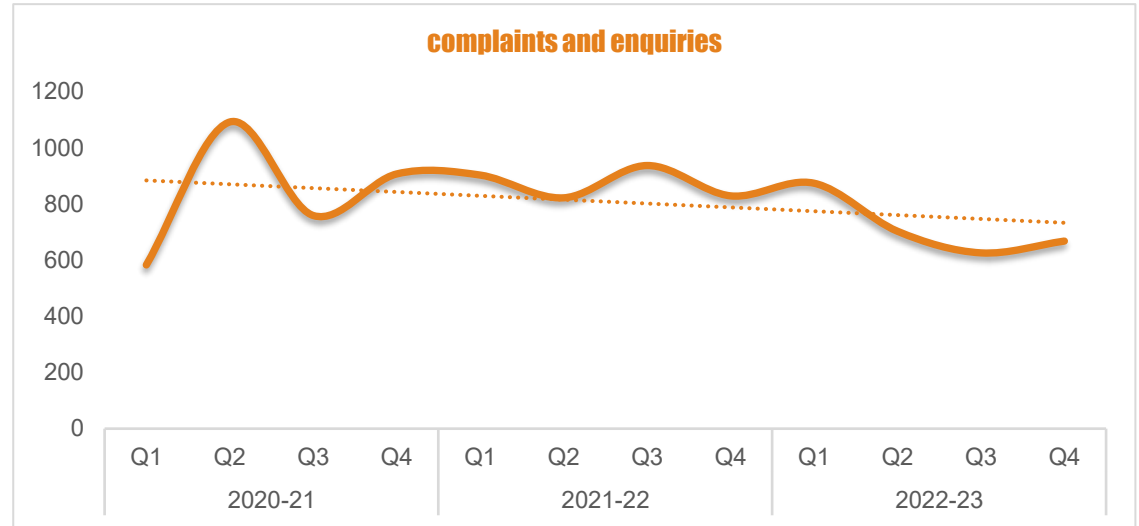
The chart (top right) shows the number complaints and enquiries recorded by WRS over a three year period relating to licensing. The chart (bottom right) shows the number of licensing applications.

Licensing complaints, enquiries and applications relate to the following;

- Alcohol and entertainment (including gambling)
- Animals
- Caravans
- Scrap metal
- Sex establishments
- Skin piercing
- Street trading
- Taxis

The number of licensing cases recorded by WRS during the year is 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.

In general terms, WRS receives a higher number of enquiries about licensing matters 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.



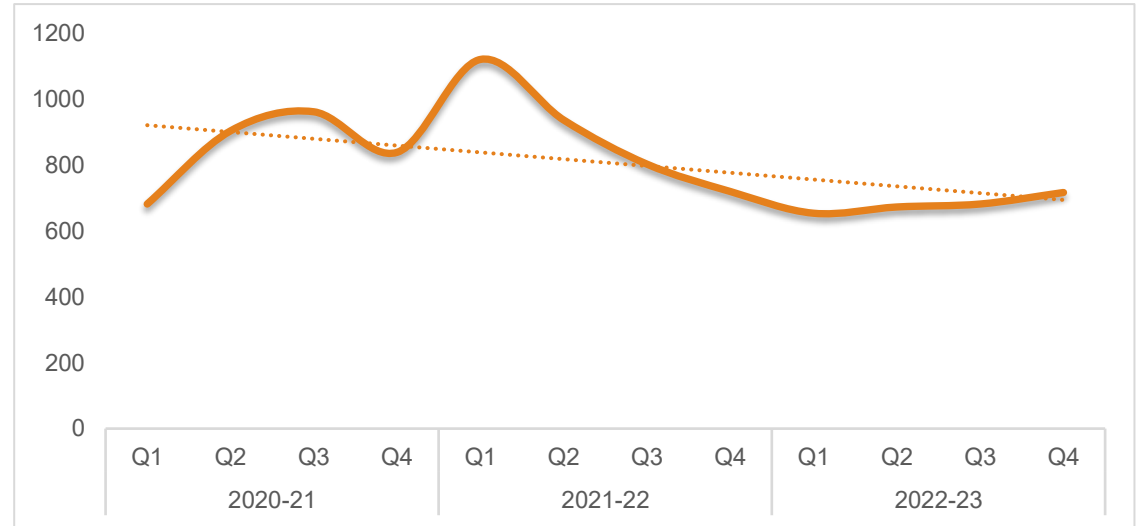
Planning

The chart (right) shows the number of planning enquiries completed by WRS over a three year period. The majority of these requests are consultations but can also include requests to discharge conditions.

Planning requests relate to the following;

- Air Quality
- Contaminated Land
- Environmental Permitting
- Food
- Health and Safety
- Nuisance / Noise
- Private Water Supplies

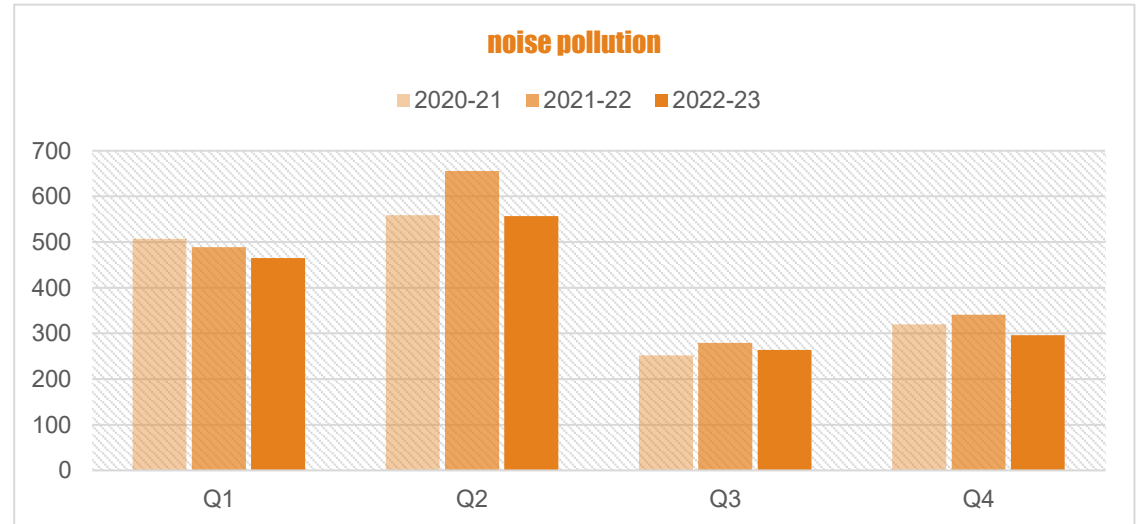
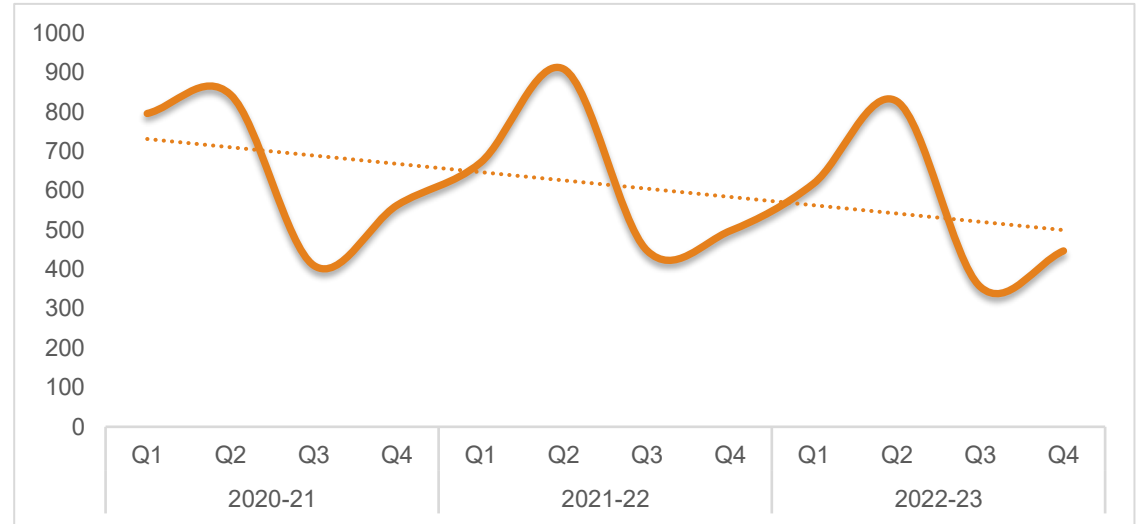
The number of planning enquiries completed by WRS during the year is a reduction of 24% compared to 2021-22, but a reduction of 19% compared to 2020-21. Approximately 89% of enquiries have been consultations, whilst 52% have related to contaminated land. Around 16% of enquiries have been completed, on a contractual basis, on behalf of other local authorities.



Pollution

The chart (right) shows the number of complaints and enquiries recorded by WRS over a three year period relating to pollution. Types of cases recorded under this category include contamination incidents, air pollution (smoke, fumes and gases), light pollution and noise pollution. The chart (bottom right) shows the number of complaints and enquiries relating to noise pollution.

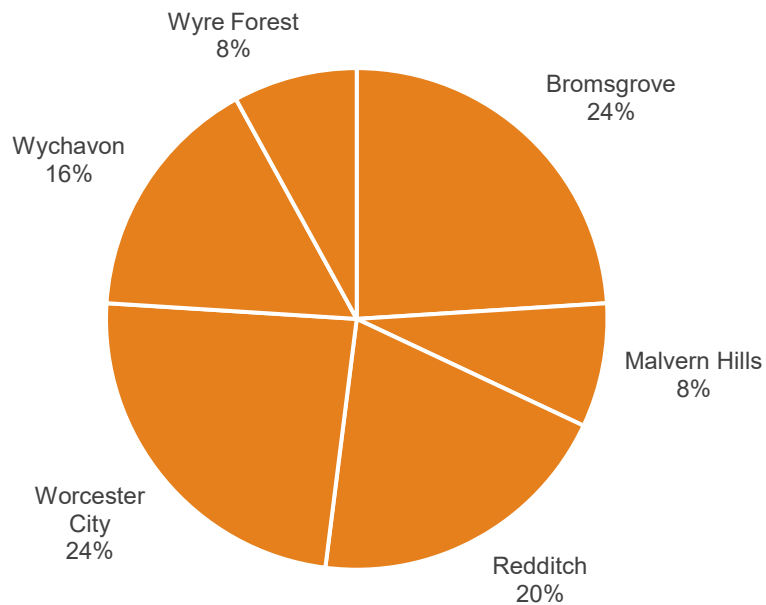
The number of pollution cases recorded by WRS during the year is a reduction of 11% compared to 2021-22, but a reduction of 14% compared to 2020-21. It should be noted, however, that the increased number of cases two years ago coincides with COVID-19 restrictions and a greater number of residents being at home. It also should be noted that totals are in line with seasonal variations. 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 12% of cases related to smoke nuisances and issues such as the burning of domestic or commercial waste.



Noise

The table (right) shows the top 25 wards in Worcestershire with the highest case rate for noise pollution cases. It also shows the relative population and the number of cases recorded. The chart (below) shows the top 25 wards by district.

Note: Data shown on this page represents the 'year to date' and will continue to increase each quarter until the end of year report is published.

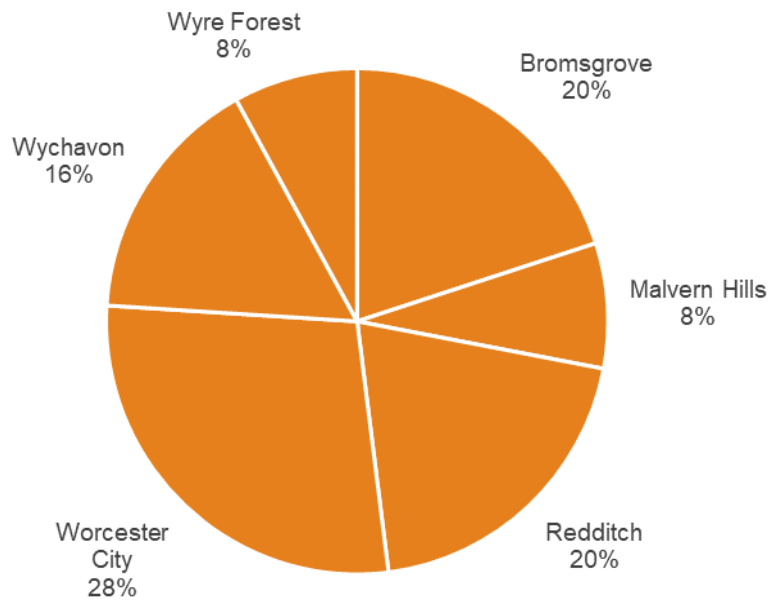


Ward	Total	Population	Rate
Marlbrook	16	2,878	5.56
Lickhill	11	2,409	4.57
Arboretum	24	6,130	3.92
Warndon	22	5,661	3.89
Headless Cross And Oakenshaw	32	8,282	3.86
Perryfields	6	1,557	3.85
Rainbow Hill	20	5,418	3.69
Cathedral	43	11,760	3.66
Teme Valley	7	2,059	3.40
Greenlands	32	9,462	3.38
Church Hill	27	7,991	3.38
Ombersley	8	2,459	3.25
Honeybourne And Pebworth	9	2,844	3.16
Loves Hill	9	2,854	3.15
Gorse Hill	18	5,764	3.12
Evesham South	16	5,429	2.95
Foley Park And Hoobrook	31	10,689	2.90
Abbey	19	6,719	2.83
Nunnery	23	8,193	2.81
Droitwich South West	14	4,994	2.80
Batchley And Brockhill	25	8,930	2.80
Priory	12	4,384	2.74
Charford	10	3,677	2.72
Barnt Green And Hopwood	8	2,951	2.71
Rock Hill	8	2,970	2.69

Noise (2021-22)

The table (right) shows the top 25 wards in Worcestershire with the highest case rate for noise pollution cases. It also shows the relative population and the number of cases recorded. The chart (below) shows the top 25 wards by district.

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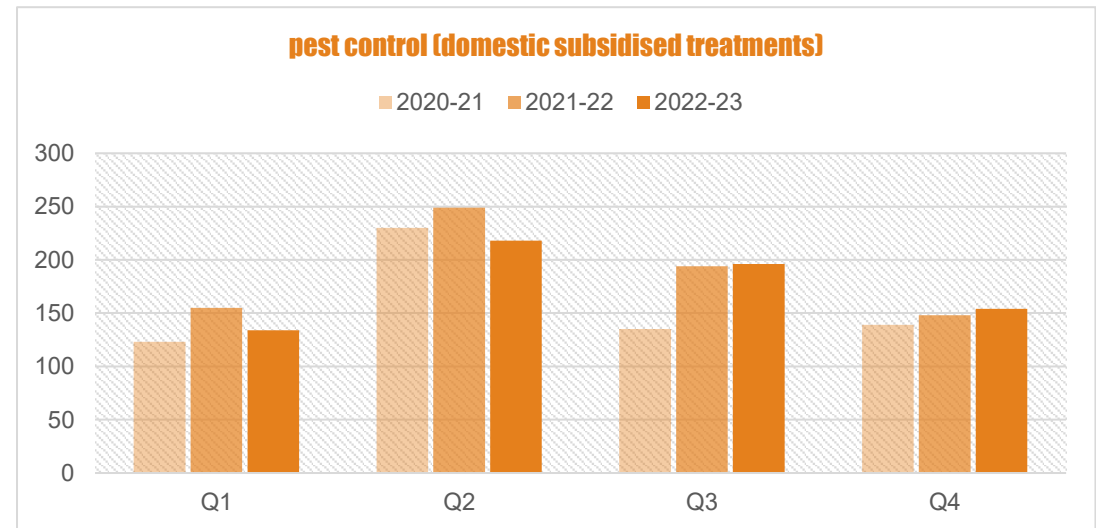
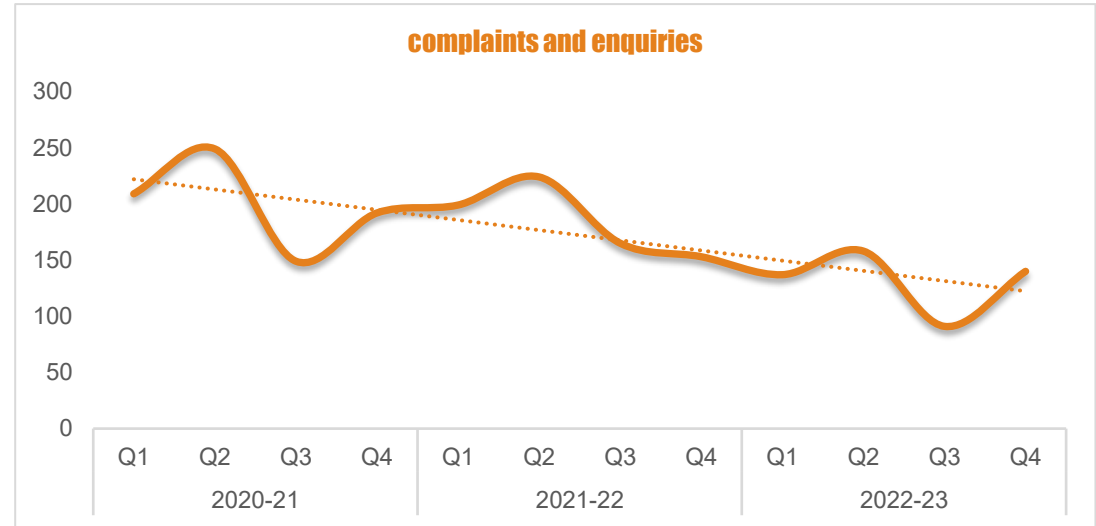
Ward	Total	Population	Rate
Eckington	22	2,669	8.24
Sanders Park	22	3,651	6.03
Norton	20	3,707	5.40
Marlbrook	14	2,890	4.84
Bedwardine	36	8,167	4.41
Harvington And Norton	12	2,756	4.35
Pinvin	13	3,105	4.19
Arboretum	25	6,233	4.01
Batchley And Brockhill	34	8,783	3.87
Rainbow Hill	21	5,511	3.81
Cathedral	43	11,763	3.66
Greenlands	33	9,329	3.54
Headless Cross And Oakenshaw	28	8,295	3.38
Perryfields	5	1,501	3.33
Winyates	27	8,184	3.30
Claines	26	8,076	3.22
Warndon	18	5,669	3.18
Link	20	6,438	3.11
Drakes Broughton	8	2,577	3.10
Church Hill	25	8,062	3.10
Avoncroft	10	3,300	3.03
Mitton	30	10,047	2.99
Gorse Hill	17	5,839	2.91
Wyre Forest Rural	26	9,106	2.86
Priory	13	4,636	2.80

Public Health

The chart (top right) shows the number of complaints and enquiries recorded by WRS over a three year period relating to public health. Types of cases recorded under this category include accumulations, public burials and pest control. The chart (bottom right) shows the number of subsidised pest control treatments have been carried out by contractors at domestic properties in four Worcestershire Districts (Bromsgrove, Malvern Hills, Redditch and Wychavon). Worcester City and Wyre Forest do not offer a subsidised pest control service.

The number off public health cases recorded by WRS during the year is a reduction of 29% compared to 2021-22, but a reduction of 34% compared to 2020-21. Approximately 63% of cases have related to pest control; whether enquiries about domestic treatments and sewer baiting, or complaints about pest control issues caused by the activity of neighbouring residents or businesses. A further 23% of cases have been complaints relating to accumulations at domestic properties which can also include pest control issues.

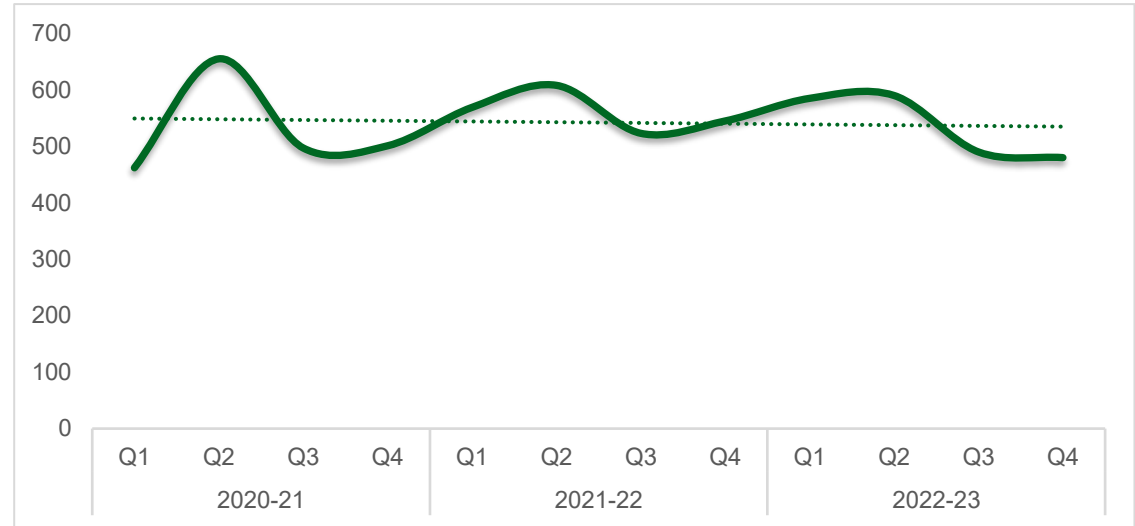
Of the 703 domestic treatments undertaken, approximately 60% have been due to issues with rats, 14% have been due to issues with wasps, and 34% have been due to pests at properties within the Wychavon district..



Bromsgrove

The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Bromsgrove district.

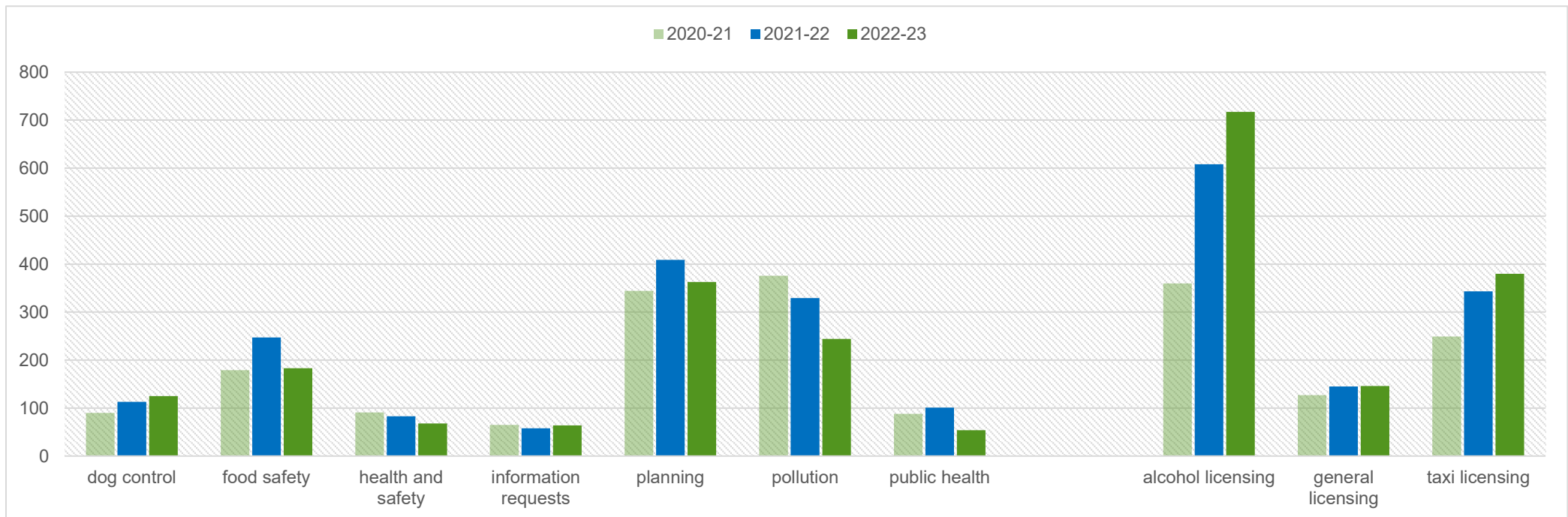
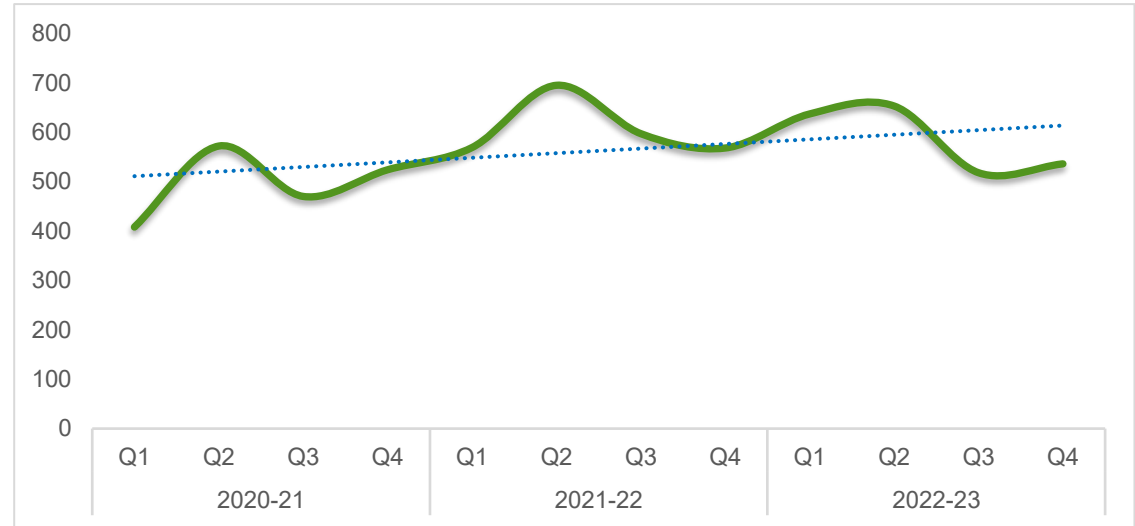
Note: The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS. The figure for the current year is a cumulative total based on each of the reporting periods. This figure will continue to increase until the end of year report is published.



Malvern Hills

The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Malvern Hills district.

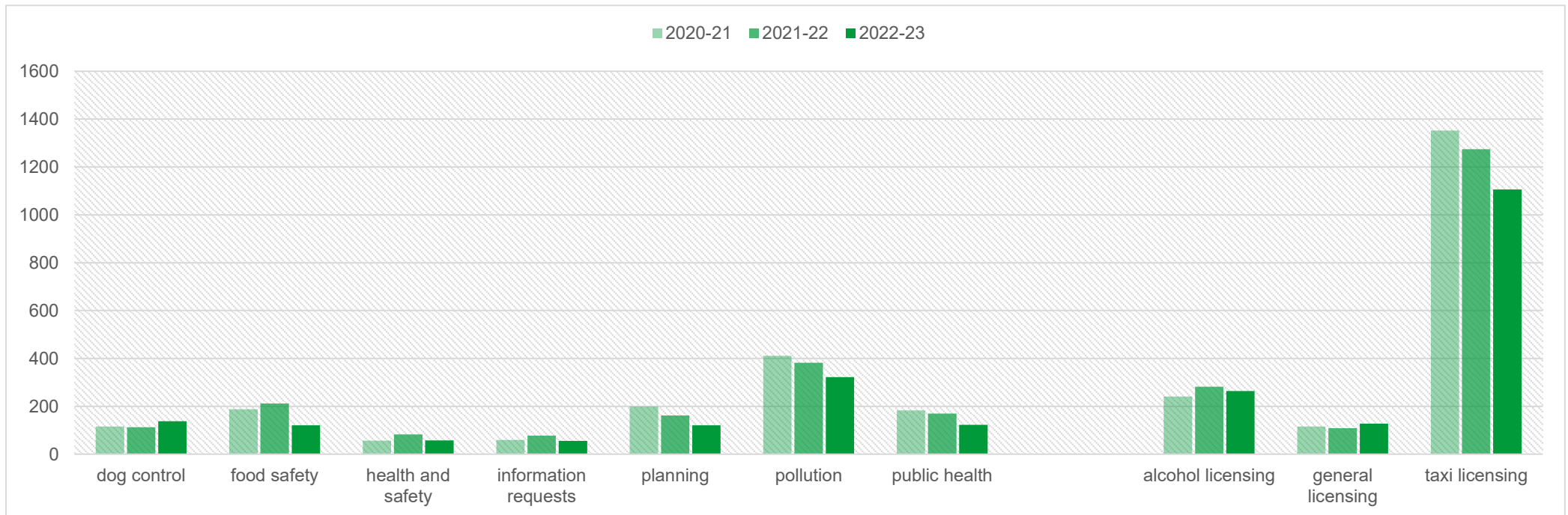
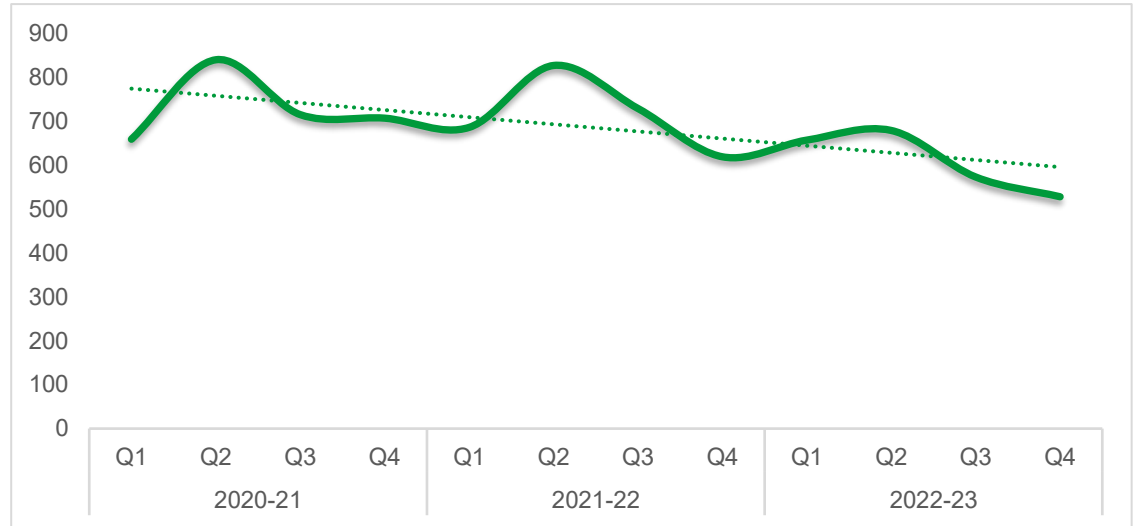
Note: The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS. The figure for the current year is a cumulative total based on each of the reporting periods. This figure will continue to increase until the end of year report is published.



Redditch

The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Redditch district.

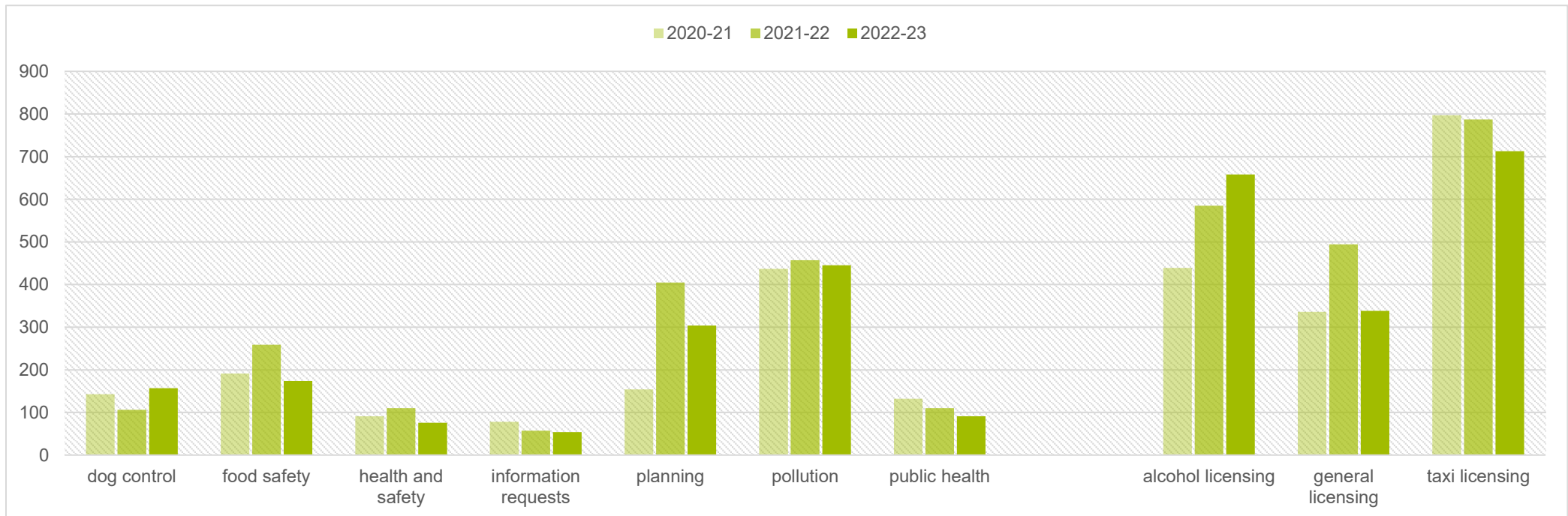
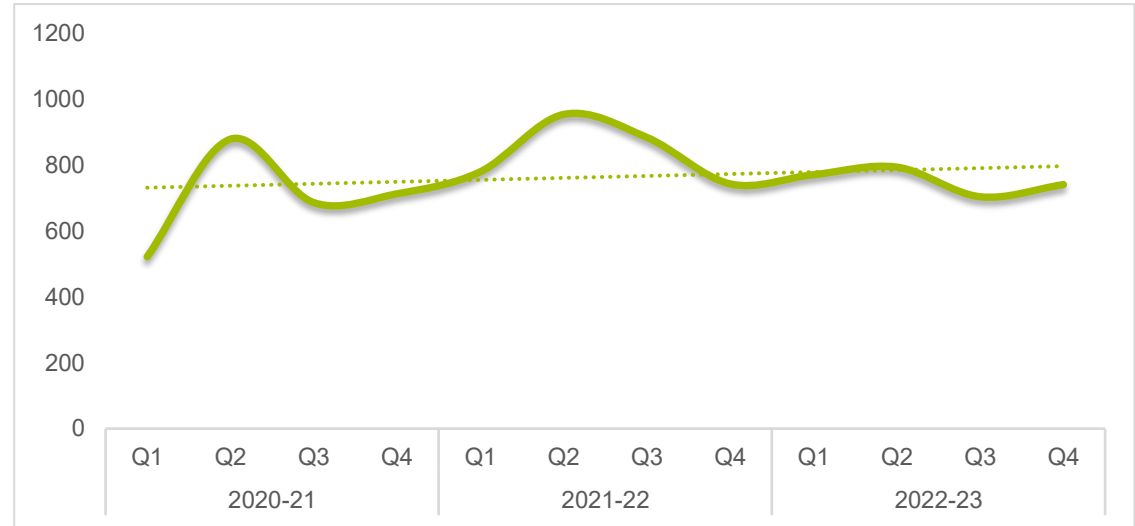
Note: The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS. The figure for the current year is a cumulative total based on each of the reporting periods. This figure will continue to increase until the end of year report is published.



Worcester City

The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Worcester City district.

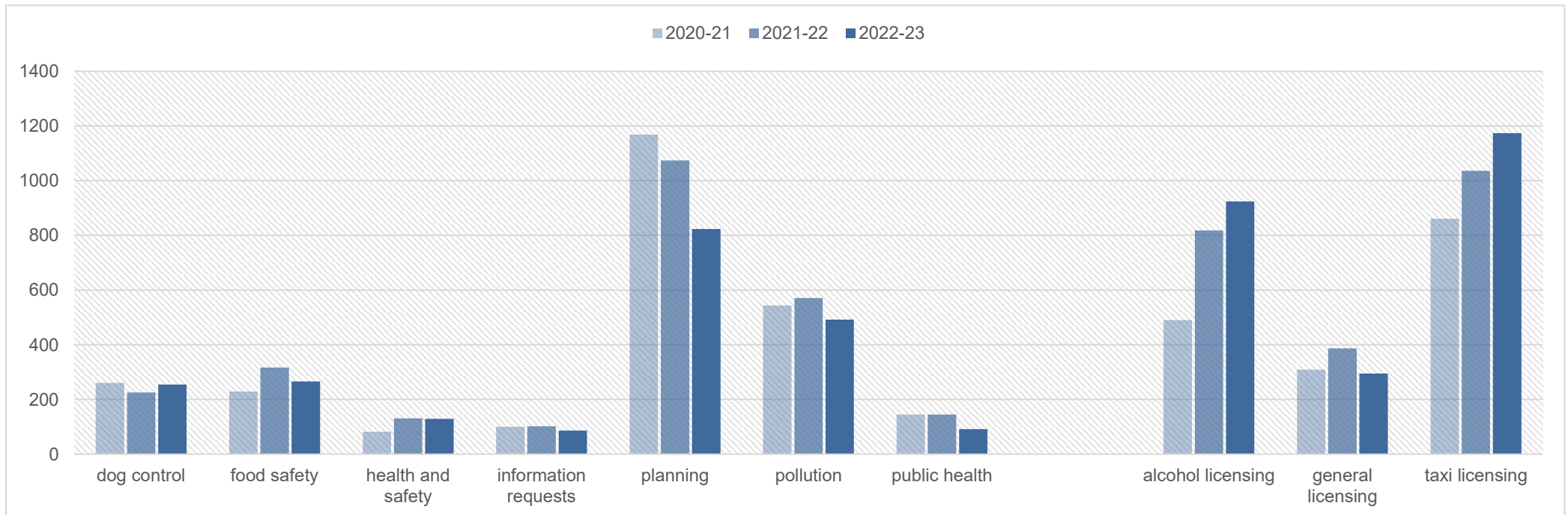
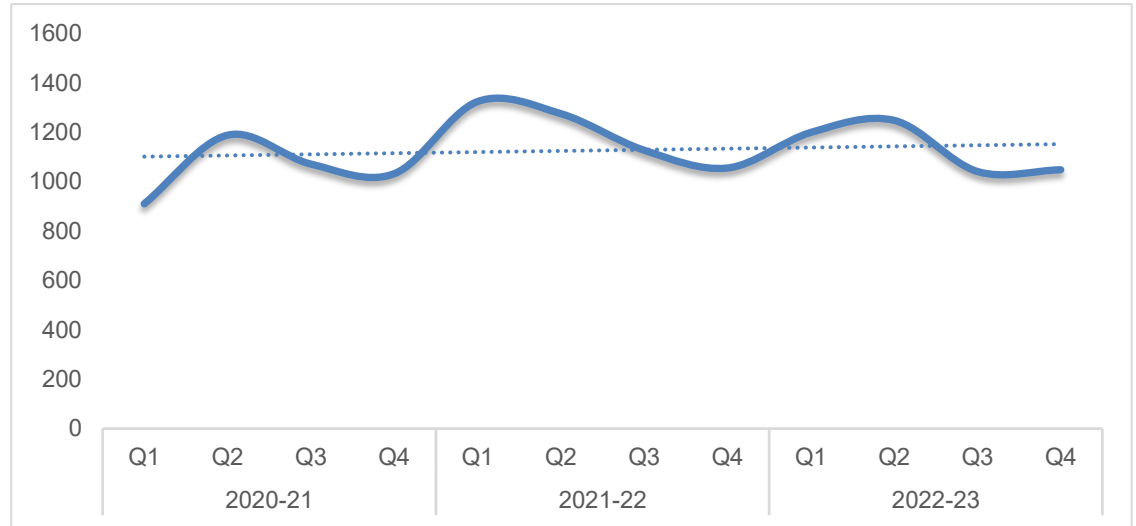
Note: The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS. The figure for the current year is a cumulative total based on each of the reporting periods. This figure will continue to increase until the end of year report is published.



Wychavon

The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Wychavon district.

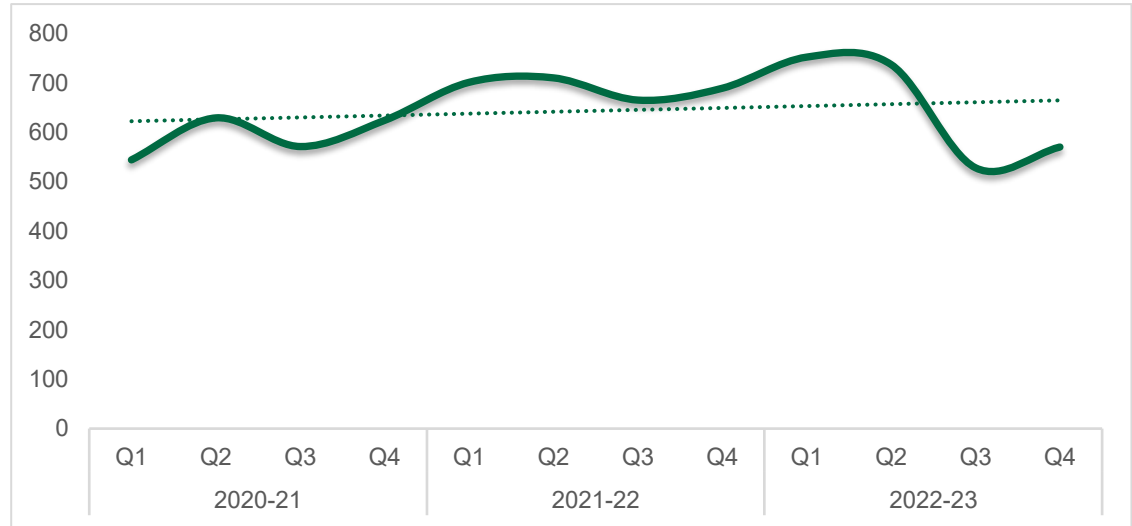
Note: The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS. The figure for the current year is a cumulative total based on each of the reporting periods. This figure will continue to increase until the end of year report is published.



Wyre Forest

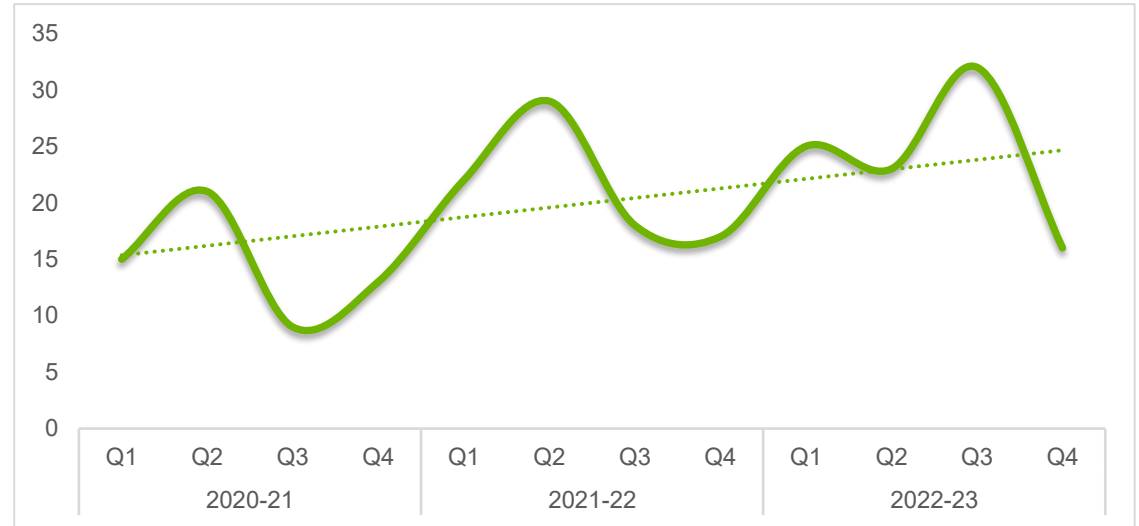
The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Wyre Forest district.

Note: The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS. The figure for the current year is a cumulative total based on each of the reporting periods. This figure will continue to increase until the end of year report is published.



Cheltenham

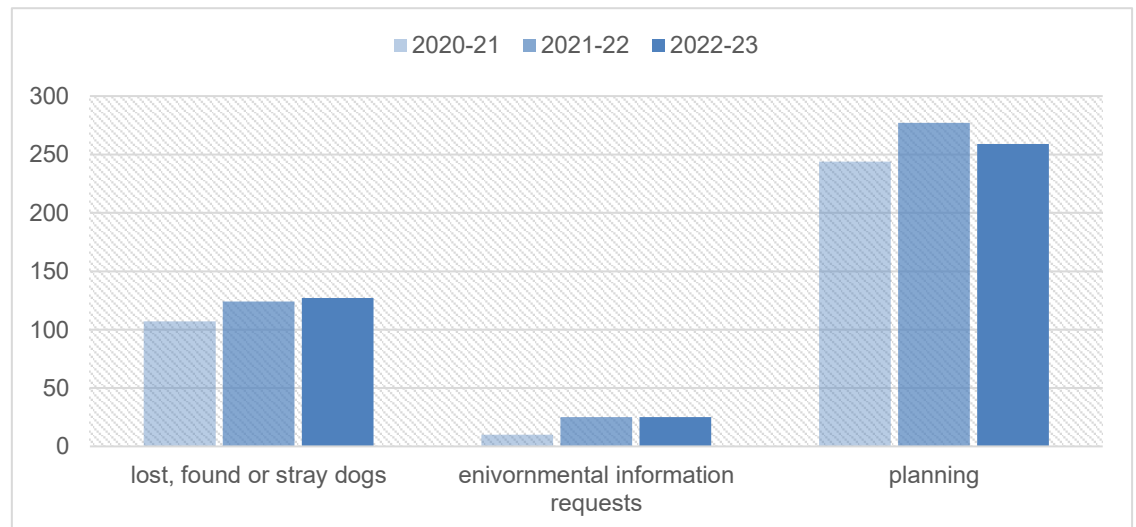
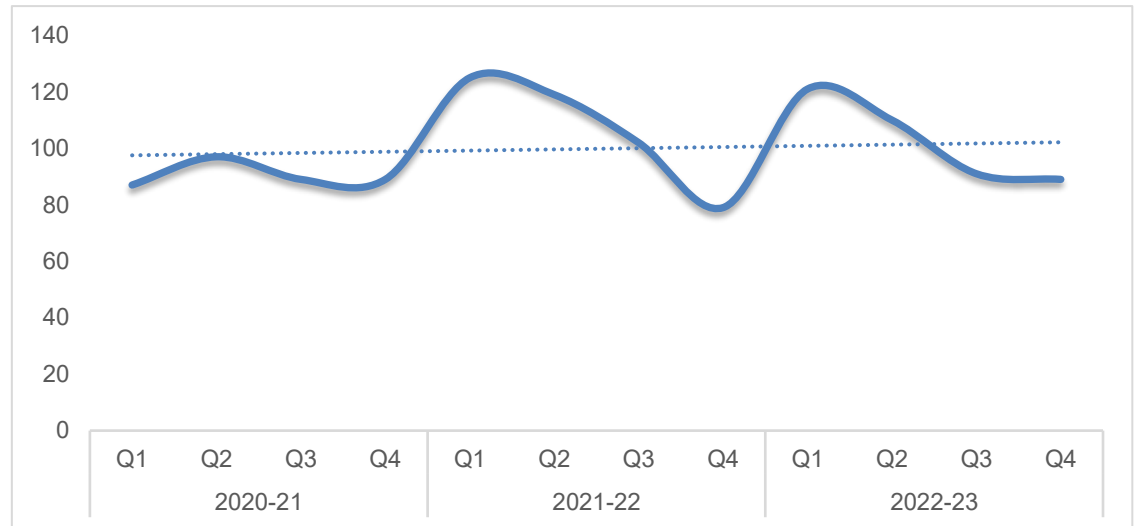
The dog control work undertaken for Cheltenham Borough Council is part of a contract with two other Gloucestershire authorities to deliver the collection, kennelling, returning of dogs to owners and rehoming of stray dog functions. The contract was recently renewed and has been highly successful in reducing stray dog numbers for Cheltenham Borough Council as well as utilising existing WRS resource and expertise. Such arrangements enable economies of scale to be realised and the continued retention of valuable assets to the benefit of Partner Authorities. As with other Gloucestershire and Worcestershire authorities, the numbers of stray dogs are reducing annually, however, this is being closely monitored as there have been recent increases in the number of abandoned strays due to the cost of living crisis and post-COVID behaviour changes.



Gloucester City

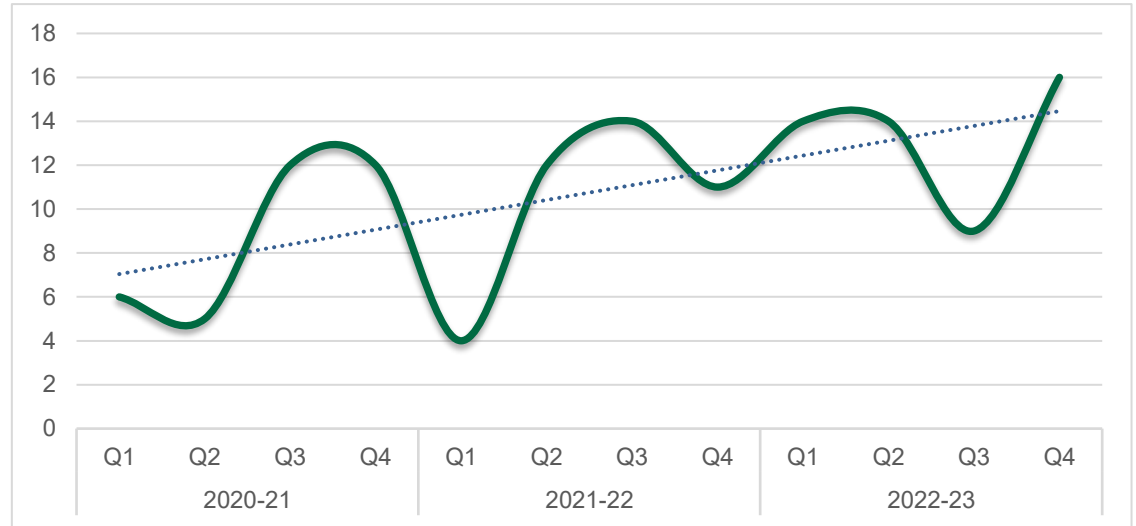
The dog control work undertaken for Gloucester City Council is part of a contract with two other Gloucestershire authorities to deliver the collection, kennelling, returning of dogs to owners and rehoming of stray dog functions. The contract was recently renewed and has been highly successful in reducing stray dog numbers for Gloucester City Council as well as utilising existing WRS resource and expertise. Such arrangements enable economies of scale to be realised and the continued retention of valuable assets to the benefit of Partner Authorities. As with other Gloucestershire and Worcestershire authorities, the numbers of stray dogs are reducing annually, however, this is being closely monitored as there have been recent increases in the number of abandoned strays due to the cost of living crisis and post-COVID behaviour changes.

In addition to dog control activity, the service continues to deal with environmental information requests and planning enquiries.



South Gloucestershire

South Gloucestershire, being located on the outskirts of Bristol, was subject to significant contaminative industries and activities historically. Pressures on brownfield development recently have presented the authority with a large volume of planning applications on significantly contaminated and complex sites. For a number of years now WRS has been asked to assist with this work focusing on the complex sites, so whilst numbers of referrals remain low, when presented they tend to be time consuming and complex. Work demand is dependant on resource availability at South Gloucestershire Council and, as a consequence, WRS is retained to undertake repeat work for them when this becomes an issue.



Tewkesbury

The dog control work undertaken for Tewkesbury Borough Council is part of a contract with two other Gloucestershire authorities to deliver the collection, kennelling, returning of dogs to owners and rehoming of stray dog functions. The contract was recently renewed and has been highly successful in reducing stray dog numbers for Tewkesbury Borough Council as well as utilising existing WRS resource and expertise. Such arrangements enable economies of scale to be realised and the continued retention of valuable assets to the benefit of Partner Authorities. As with other Gloucestershire and Worcestershire authorities, the numbers of stray dogs are reducing annually, however, this is being closely monitored as there have been recent increases in the number of abandoned strays due to the cost of living crisis and post-COVID behaviour changes.

In addition to dog control activity, the service continues to deal with planning enquiries.

