

Worcestershire
Regulatory Services

Supporting and protecting you

Activity Report | 2023-24



Bromsgrove
District Council
www.bromsgrove.gov.uk



Malvern
Hills
District
Council
www.malvernhills.gov.uk



REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL
making
a
difference
www.redditchbc.gov.uk



Worcester
CITY COUNCIL



WYCHAVON
DISTRICT COUNCIL
good services, good value



Wyre Forest
District Council

Foreword

Welcome to the first activity report for 2023/24. It follows the familiar format that long standing Board members will have seen many times. This covers the period 1st April to 30th June 2023, but the graphs and tables allow comparison with the data in previous quarters and years.

Stray dog numbers increased from the end of Q4 last year through Q1 of this year. Dog control complaints more or less followed the trend line.

Food cases (complaints and enquiries,) followed the downward trend line and a good number (over 350,) food interventions under FHRS took place. The number of accidents reported increased during Q1 but only as far as the trend line with complaints and enquiries on health and safety falling.

Information requests fell from the end of Q4 last year finished slightly below the trend at the end of June, whilst requests for the planning system continued the slow increase that began last Autumn.

Licensing work remained on an even keel through the quarter, at levels close to what would be anticipated.

Pollution and nuisance complaints followed their usual seasonal upward trend from their low point at the end of Q3. The pick up in numbers seemed to begin earlier this year, likely because of the periods of relatively good weather, with June being excellent if you like the warmth. Nuisance complaint levels appear inextricably linked to the weather, with more coming in when the weather is good and windows are left open. Public Health related complaints (accumulations, public burials, etc,) followed the downward trend, more or less.

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.



Simon Wilkes

Head of Regulatory Services

Community Environmental Health

Updates from David Mellors (Environmental Health And Trading Standards Manager)

Quarter One

The team continued its food recovery programme into 2023/4 and conducted 370 interventions at food businesses during the quarter. Some 97% of food premises across the county are rated compliant or better. However, where unsatisfactory standards were found, swift remedial action was taken, and a Simple Caution was issued to a non-compliant meat processing premises in Bromsgrove.

Officers have an ongoing investigation into premises in Redditch which prepared a meal for an employee who subsequently suffered an anaphylactic shock and are currently investigating a serious accident in Worcester where a member of the public fell down a lift shaft.

Sadly, the team are also investigating fatalities including the death of a member of the public involved in a white-collar boxing event and a child thrown from a vehicle involved in a sporting event.

However, prevention is better than cure and your Officers were proactively involved during the period in chairing Safety Advisory Groups [SAGs], whereby enforcement partners including the Police, Fire and Rescue and the Ambulance Service come together to provide advice to organisers to support them in ensuring the safety of their events. These included Worcester Racecourse, the Battle of Evesham, Three Counties Rally, Worcester Passion Play and the Worcester Balloon Festival.

A noise abatement notice was served in connection with a Bromsgrove property in January due to noise from barking dogs. The notice was subsequently breached this quarter and legal proceedings are now pending.

Officers contributed to Worcester City's consultation response in respect of Airbnb premises and engaged with Central Government in respect of emissions from wood burners.

Licensing

Updates from Kiran Lahel (Licensing And Support Services Manager)

Quarter One

The team commenced Quarter 1 busier than the start of Quarter 4 with Licensing applications and queries up compared to this time last quarter. Officers encourage the return of fully completed applications however there still remain many where officers need to chase for information which can cause a bottleneck in the system. The introduction of payment automation will see a reduction in this and bring in long term efficiencies.

Taxi queries remain the highest area of contact and officers proceed to meet the demands of a continuously growing number of licensed drivers and vehicles across the County. The team continue with enforcement priorities in the night time economy with officers working with both the civil enforcement teams and West Mercia Police to carry out operations. Officers also carried out a Joint enforcement operation in Bromsgrove with Wolverhampton City Council due to a number of complaints regarding Wolverhampton licensed vehicles.

Officers have been out undertaking test purchase exercises across the County in regards to the requirements under the Equality Act. Taxi drivers have a legal obligation to accept assistance dogs in their vehicles unless they have medical condition which prevents them from doing so. Three out of the six districts have so far been tested with further testing planned for the remainder of the year.

Animal Licensing queries have also seen a steady increase and the team are working with the intelligence team to introduce a new process to deal with unlicensed breeders. Currently the guidance of what stipulates a licensed breeder is confusing for those that require a licence so the team continue to engage with DEFRA, the Canine Feline Sector Group and the Local Animal Welfare Group to Nationally review the guidance. There were two Zoo inspections that took place this quarter at the Falconry Centre and All things Wild and officers were happy with both visits so no immediate follow up visits are required.

Work in the Night Time Economy continues with officers engaging with West Mercia Police and district colleagues to carry out joint visits to events and premises which are of concern and where issues have been identified in previous years. Officers continue to attend pubwatch meetings, meetings with Worcester Bid and the district economic development teams to advise and keep abreast of any new developments in each district.

Finally Members training commenced towards the end of the quarter for all six districts and took a slightly different format than previous years, using roleplay in some districts and videos in others to allow more interaction than previously. Feedback has been positive and officers will continue to look at different ways to ensure engagement and momentum in these sessions.

Technical Services

Updates from Mark Cox (Technical Services Manager)

Quarter One

Air Quality

Following the successful award of an Air Quality Grant from DEFRA in Q4 2023, progress to start the planning and implementation of the grant was commenced. Progress on the selection and purchase of monitors progressed as well as location planning.

To identify measures for the Worcester City section of the Air Quality Action Plan and Air Quality Strategy, the structure of the AQ Steering Group was expanded to include 3 subgroups based on Transport & Planning, Public Health and Sustainability subject areas. These groups are working together to identify measures that will bring about the necessary air quality improvements. Work has commenced on identification of air quality improvement measures in Bromsgrove and Wyre Forest areas.

Contaminated Land

Our contaminated land related work for the 6 Worcestershire Districts and Gloucester City and South Gloucestershire Councils continued, providing responses to environmental requests in relation to property sales, consultants enquiries and any other requests for info. Our work continues to involve a lot of complex sites with historical land use which are dealt with via the planning process in each of the districts. A few examples of particularly complex sites included:

The part demolition and site clearance of the former Blue Bird factory site in Bromsgrove for redevelopment to provide 116 residential dwellings (Use Class C3), consisting of both new dwellings and conversion of the Welfare and Administration buildings, along with associated landscaping; drainage; engineering; highways and access works.

The proposed development of a former Aluminium Foundry near Kidderminster into Energy and Resource Park.

The demolition of an old fuel depot in Gloucester and site remediation and associated earthworks to facilitate development for 70 residential dwellings with associated infrastructure and open space, to include creation of development platforms, provision of flood compensation and structures for ecological mitigation.

Engineering works to remediate site of an old Gas Works site in Gloucester.

Nuisance Planning and Permitting Processes

Our environmental health planning work for the 6 Worcestershire Districts plus Gloucester City and Tewkesbury continued including many new takeaways and a notable number of solar farms with battery storage.

We received a permit application for a new precious metal recovery process in Redditch which is also jointly regulated with the Environment Agency as well as dealing with planning matters relating to the same. Further to the requirements of the Industrial Emissions Directive all permits have been published on our website as well as routine For Gloucester, work was ongoing for A2 for solvent impregnation Permitting Application (170 representations) and Granting Part B for filament winding. A successful Prosecution of Strickland Trucks resulted in a conditional discharge after operating for over ten years without the required permit to control environmental pollution.

Homes for Ukraine Support Workers

Following the cessation of the support to Malvern Hills and Wychavon Councils with their Homes for Ukraine schemes, we continue to support Redditch and Bromsgrove by managing the scheme on their behalf with three from the former COVID Advisor team who act as support workers. All guests who come to the UK on the Homes for Ukraine scheme have a 3-year visa, and the council have a duty of care of the guests for the full 3-year period. The support workers continue with the safeguarding and welfare checks, also helping with rematching / rehoming process with some host and guest coming to the end of their sponsorship and sometimes where there is a relationship breakdown and are still providing a lot of after care when the guests become independent moving into a private rental accommodation such as helping set up bills and finding local schools etc.

Across the two districts there are 45 families still with hosts, 7 families moved into social housing, 22 families moved into private renting, 12 families return to Ukraine and 18 families moved to a different county or country. There have been 19 arrivals in 2023.

IT Development

As well as our normal day to day work, the first quarter of the financial year is always busy as we prepare and submit most of our government returns. During the quarter we also collaborated closely with our host IT as they implemented a new web-based telephone system. We also had similar involvement at the start of the process of changing the mobile phone provider for all staff and our cyber security training system.

We have worked on Service-wide projects, including the Automation Project and initial work to introduce a new mapping system for our back-office database. 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 deletions.

We have continued income generation work with IDOX database support for colleagues in Bromsgrove and Redditch Planning, Worcestershire Trading Standards, and Tewkesbury Borough Council's Environmental Health and Licensing teams.

Dog Warden Service

The stray dog service remains incredibly busy with an ever increasing number of dogs received with welfare concerns. Most dogs with welfare concerns are not being claimed by their owners putting pressure on the service to find homes for dogs with such complex needs as well as increased veterinary bills for the service and prospective new owners.

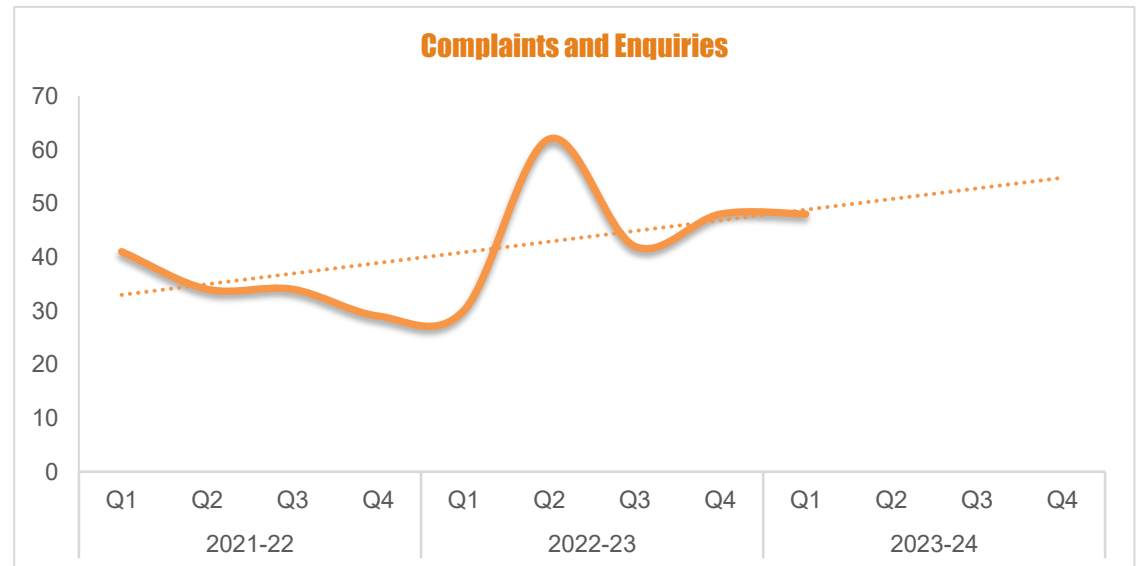
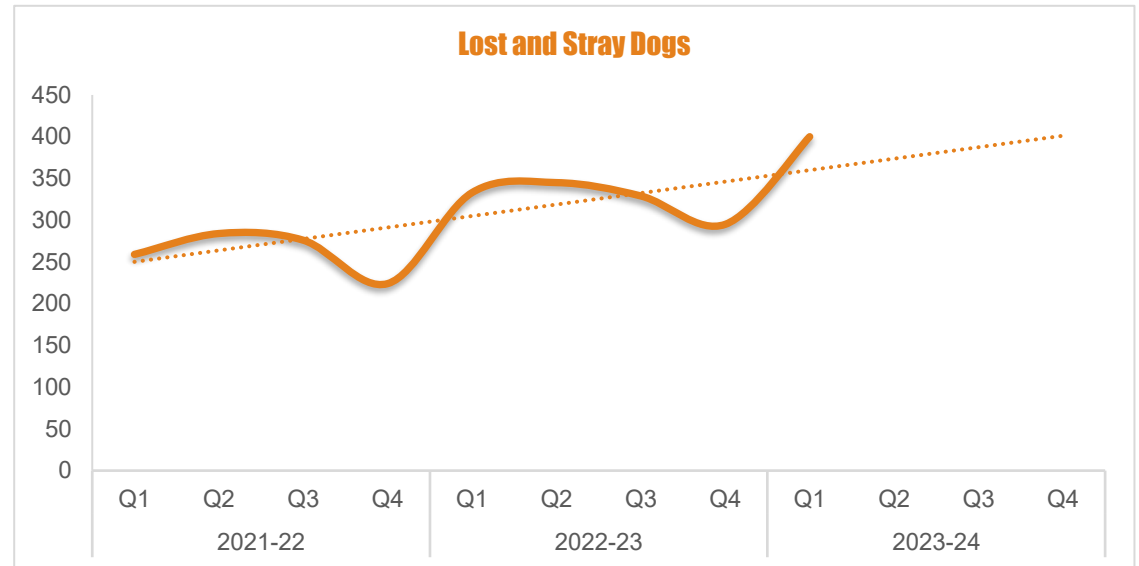
Dog Control

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.

Comments

The number of stray or lost dogs recorded by WRS during quarter one is an increase of 50% compared to 2021-22, but an increase of 24% compared to 2022-23. Approximately 89% of cases related to stray or lost dogs, with 67% of cases relating to "contained strays" (meaning dogs were found and held by a member of the public). Overall, 65% of strays were reunited with their owners, however, figures vary significantly between local authorities. Over the last three years you will note that, in Worcestershire, the number of dogs is increasing which is different to pre-pandemic levels which showed a long term trend of decreasing numbers of stray dogs being reported to the Council.

In general terms, WRS receives a relatively low number of dog control complaints. Based on the 21 complaints recorded, 9 related to dog fouling and persistent straying, 8 related to dangerous dogs, and 4 related to welfare concerns.



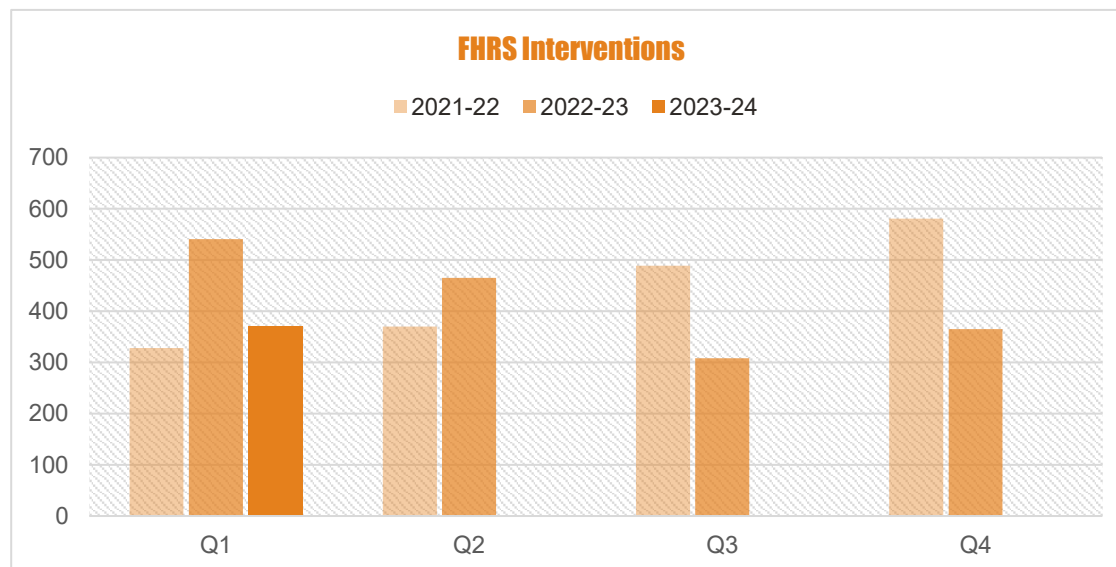
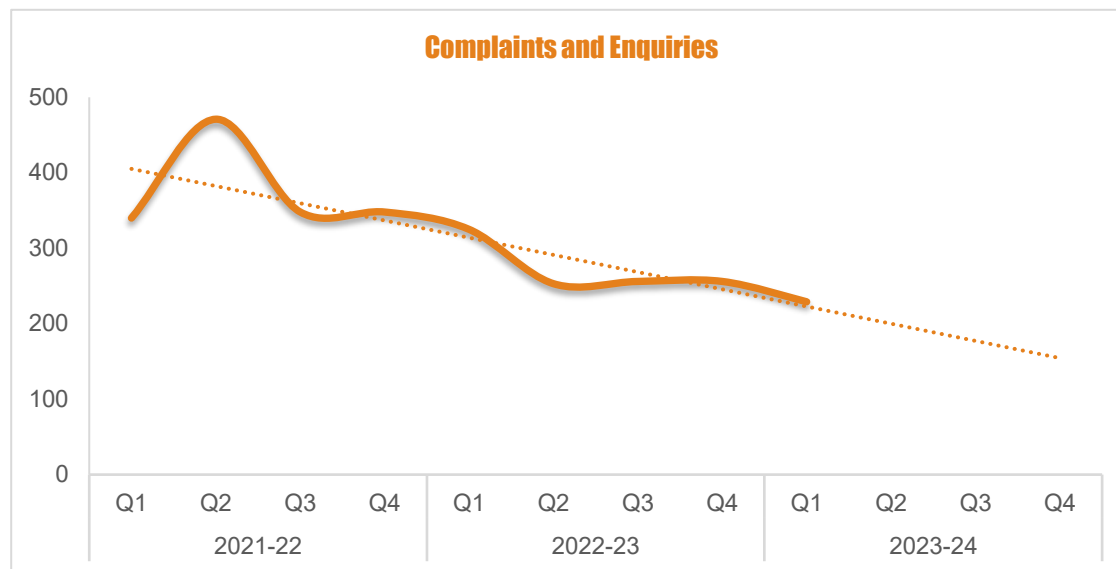
Food Safety

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.

Comments

The number of food safety cases recorded by WRS during quarter one is a reduction of 33% compared to 2021-22, and a reduction of 30% compared to 2022-23. In general terms, a higher proportion of food safety cases are enquiries such as requests for business advice or requests for export health certificates. Based on the 107 complaints recorded during quarter one, 68% related to issues with products purchased from food businesses, whilst 32% related to poor hygiene standards or practices.

Of the 370 interventions conducted at businesses included in the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRs) during quarter one, 11 were rated as non-compliant (0, 1 or 2). Over half these ratings were issued to pub, clubs, or takeaways.

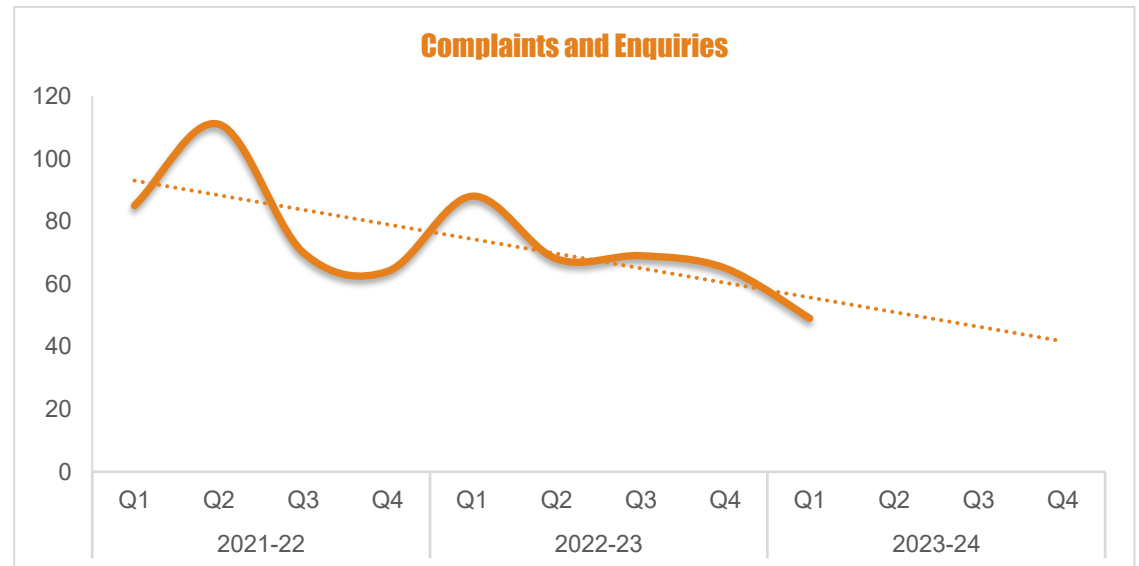
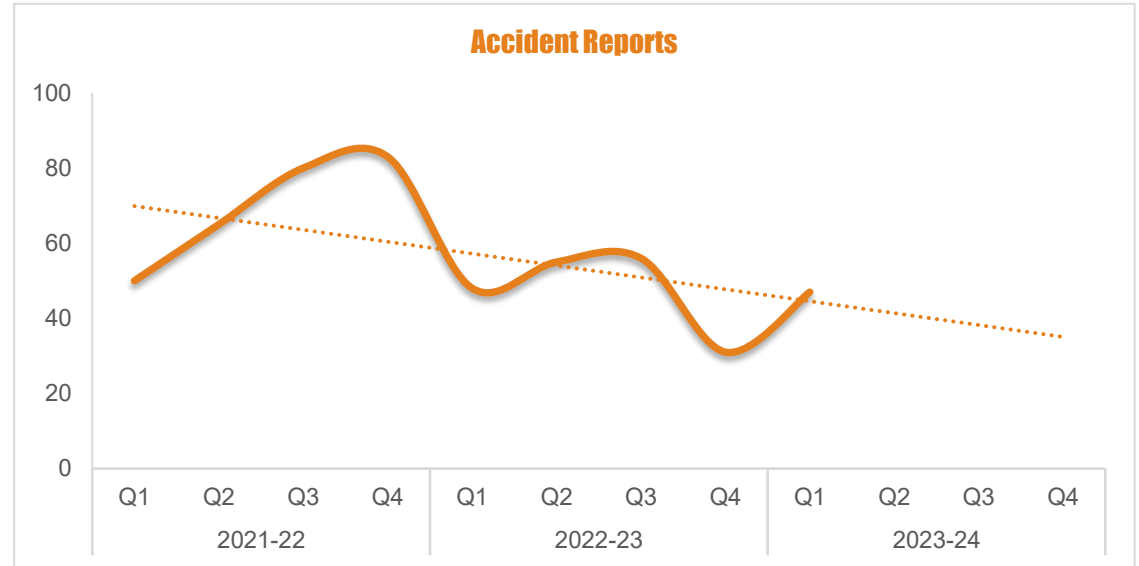


Health and Safety

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.

Comments

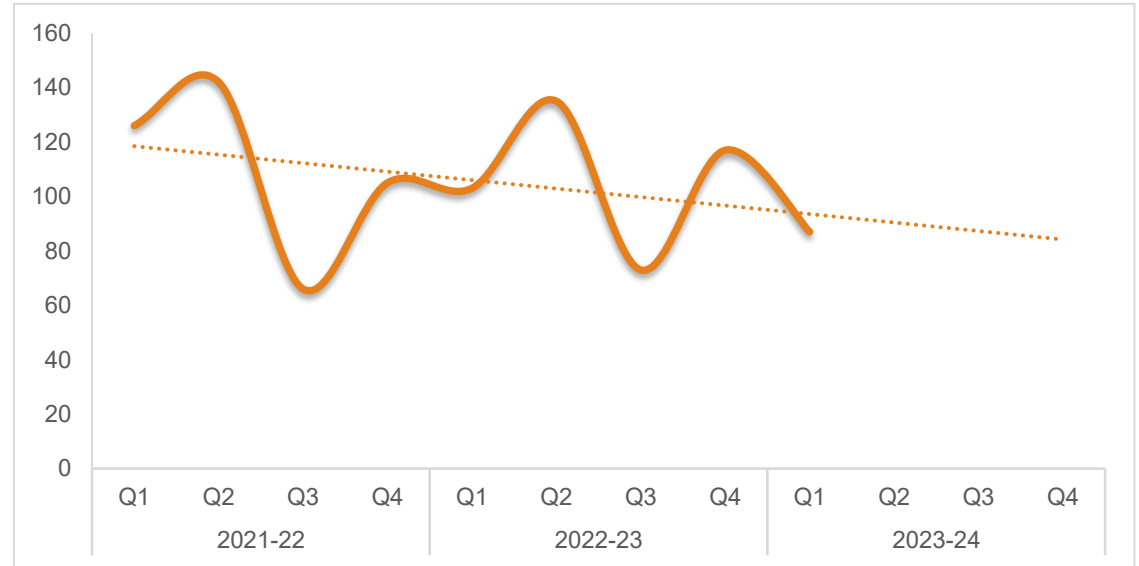
The number of health and safety at work cases recorded by WRS during quarter one is a reduction of 29% compared to 2021-22 and 2022-23. Approximately 49% of cases were reports of accidents, with 72% of accidents relating to injuries where a worker was incapacitated for more than seven days or injuries to members of the public. 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.

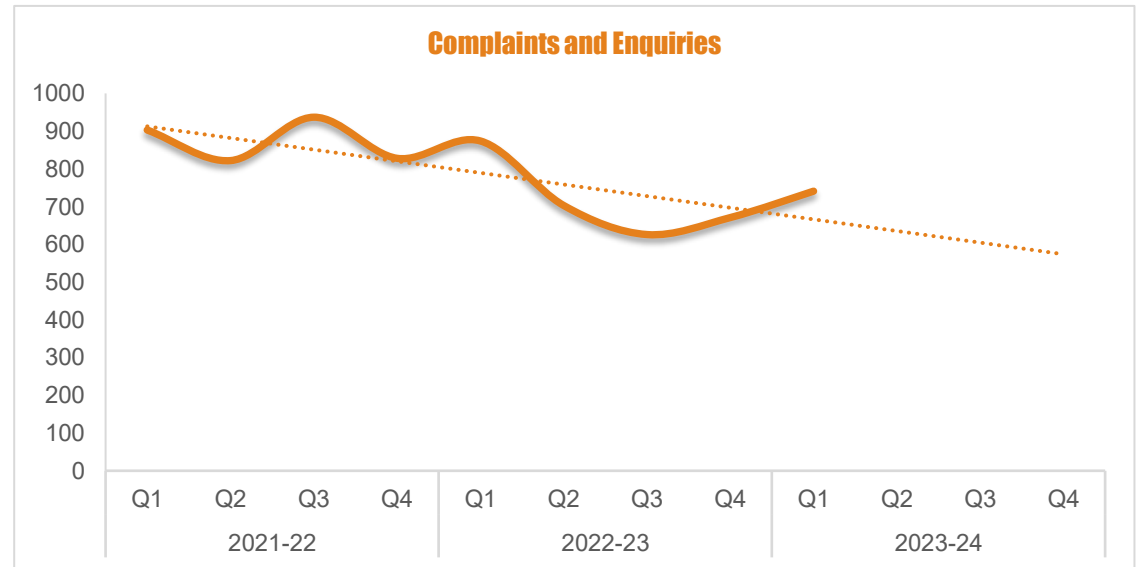
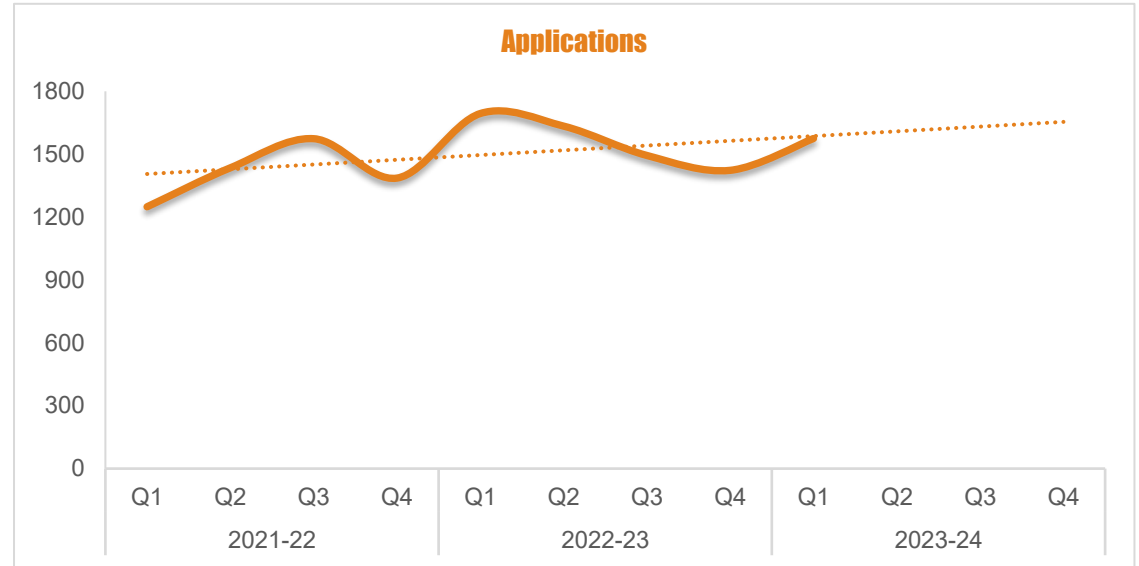
Licensing complaints, enquiries and applications relate to the following;

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

Comments

The number of licensing cases recorded by WRS during quarter one is an increase of 8% compared to 2021-22, but a reduction of 10% compared to 2022-23. Approximately 68% of cases were applications and registrations; with 30% relating to temporary events, 27% relating to private hire or hackney carriage vehicles, and 14% 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 173 complaints recorded, 41% related to taxi licensing, 32% to alcohol licensing, and 17% to animal licensing.



Planning

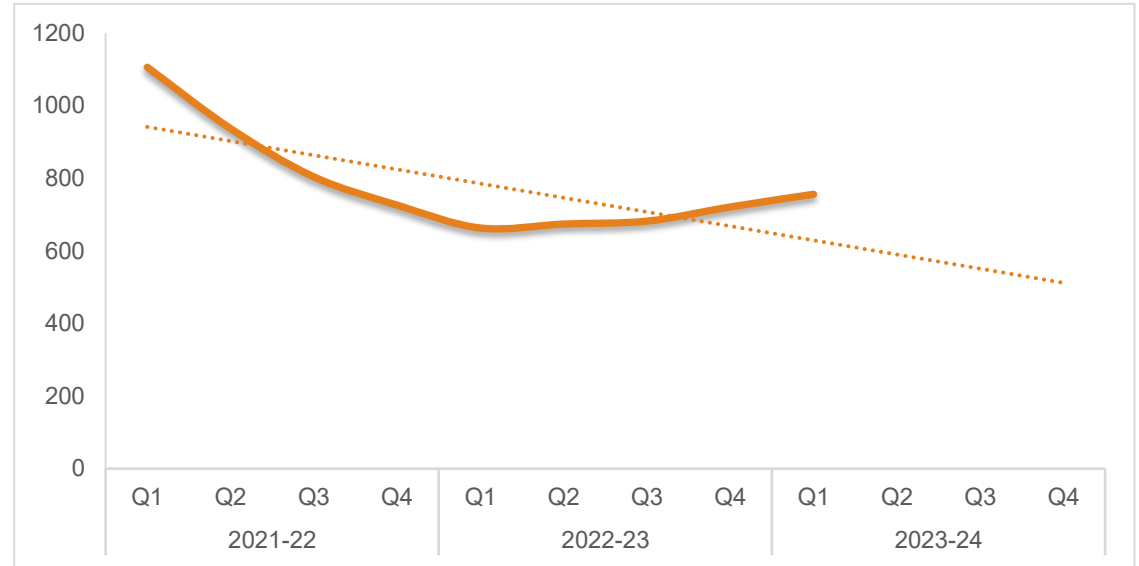
The chart (right) shows the number of planning enquiries completed by WRS over a three year period. The majority of these requests are consultations but can also include requests to discharge conditions.

Planning requests relate to the following;

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

Comments

The number of planning enquiries completed by WRS during quarter one is a reduction of 32% compared to 2021-22, but an increase of 14% compared to 2022-23. Approximately 92% of enquiries were consultations, whilst 45% related to contaminated land. Around 20% of enquiries were completed, on a contractual basis, on behalf of other local authorities.

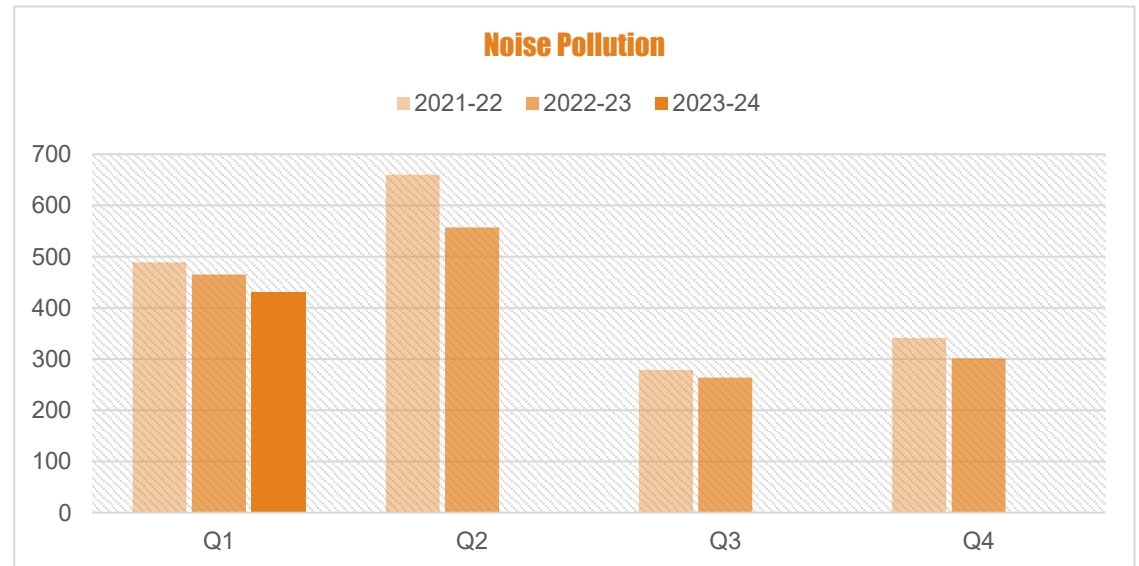
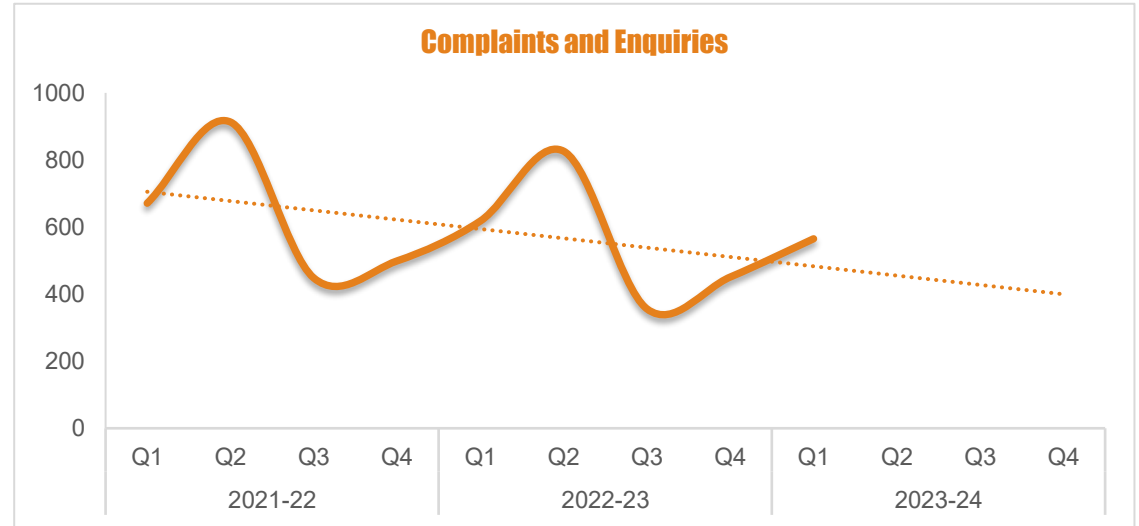


Pollution

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.

Comments

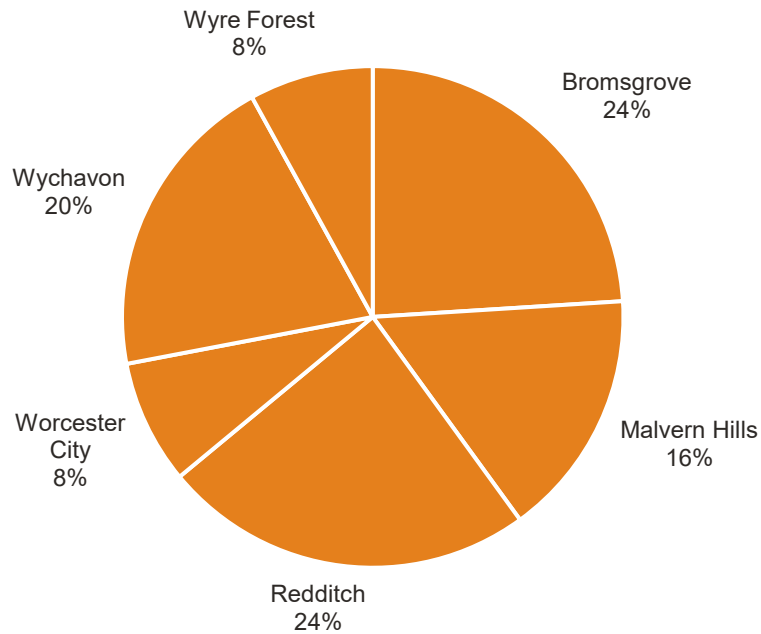
The number of pollution cases recorded by WRS during quarter one is a reduction of 16% compared to 2021-22, and a reduction of 9% compared to 2022-23. It should be noted, however, that case totals are in line with seasonal variations. Approximately 76% of cases related to noise nuisances, with noise from domestic properties (such as noise from dog barking or noise from audio-visual equipment) the most prominent sources. A further 11% of cases related to smoke nuisances 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.

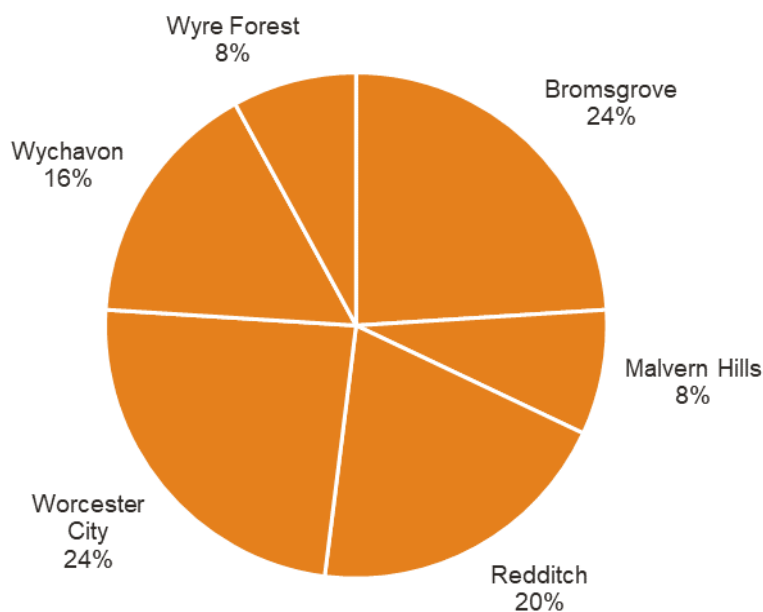


Ward	Total	Population	Rate
Honeybourne And Pebworth	10	2,844	3.52
Lowes Hill	6	2,854	2.10
Central (Redditch)	12	6,841	1.75
Cathedral	19	11,760	1.62
Link	9	6,455	1.39
Perryfields	2	1,557	1.28
Ombersley	3	2,459	1.22
Droitwich Central	3	2,621	1.14
Winyates	9	8,139	1.11
Greenlands	10	9,462	1.06
Rock Hill	3	2,970	1.01
Matchborough	6	6,029	1.00
Droitwich West	5	5,217	0.96
Drakes Cross	3	3,202	0.94
Saint John	8	8,736	0.92
Priory	4	4,384	0.91
Batchley And Brockhill	8	8,930	0.90
Mitton	9	10,110	0.89
Lindridge	2	2,298	0.87
Lickhill	2	2,409	0.83
Bromsgrove Central	3	3,861	0.78
Norton	3	3,876	0.77
West (Malvern)	3	3,996	0.75
Abbey	5	6,719	0.74
Bengeworth	6	8,144	0.74

Noise (2022/23)

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 last financial year and has been taken from the 2022-23 Activity Report.



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
Omersley	8	2,459	3.25
Honeybourne And Pebworth	9	2,844	3.16
Lowes 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

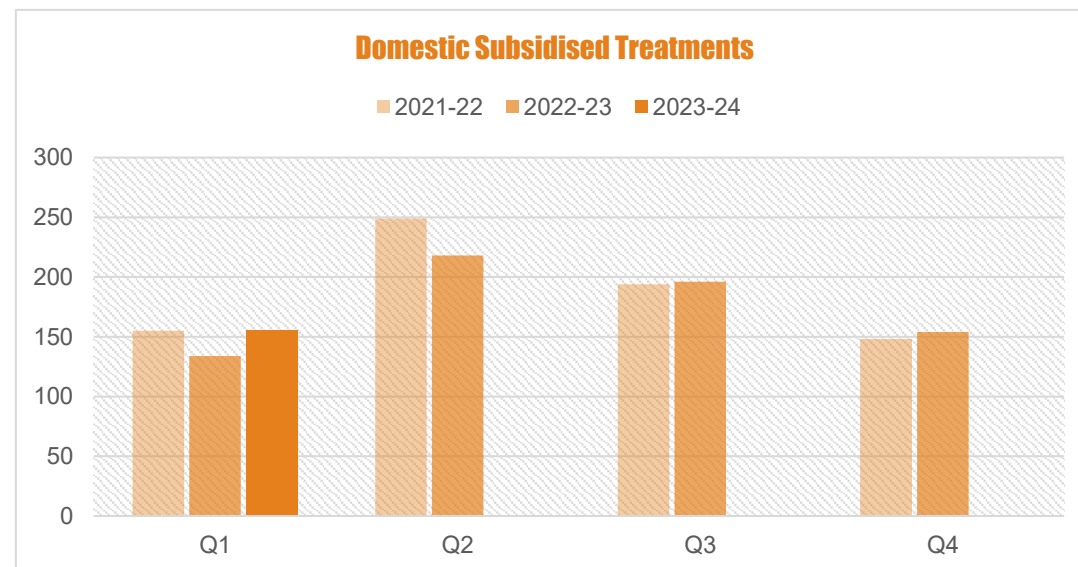
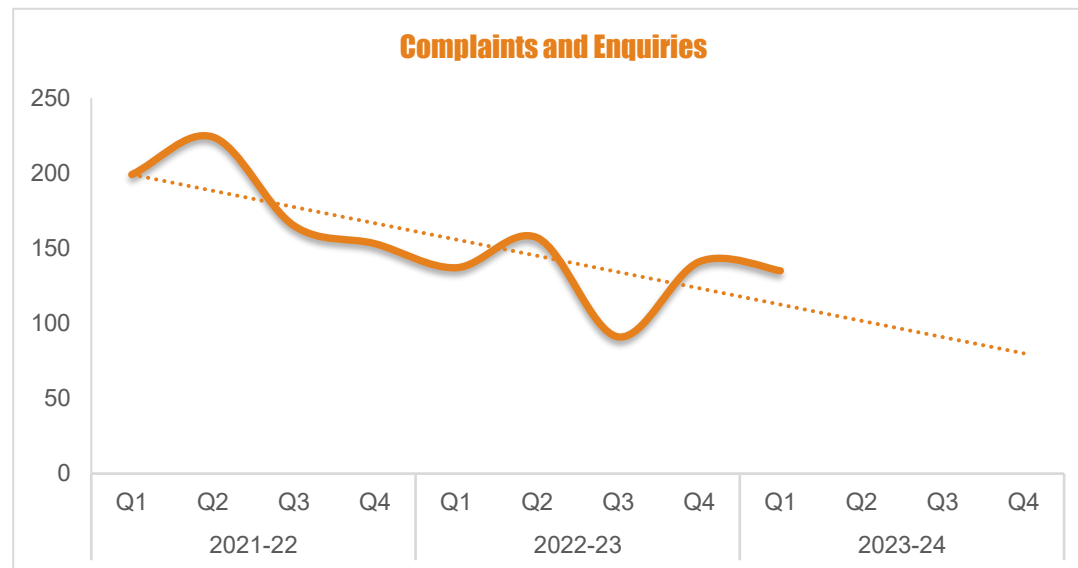
Public Health

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.

Comments

The number of public health cases recorded by WRS during the year is a reduction of 35% compared to 2021-22, but broadly consistent with 2022-23. Approximately 63% of cases have related to pest control, such as enquiries about domestic treatments enquires about sewer baiting, or complaints about pest control issues caused by the activity of neighbouring residents or businesses. A further 24% of cases were complaints relating to accumulations at domestic properties which can also include pest control issues.

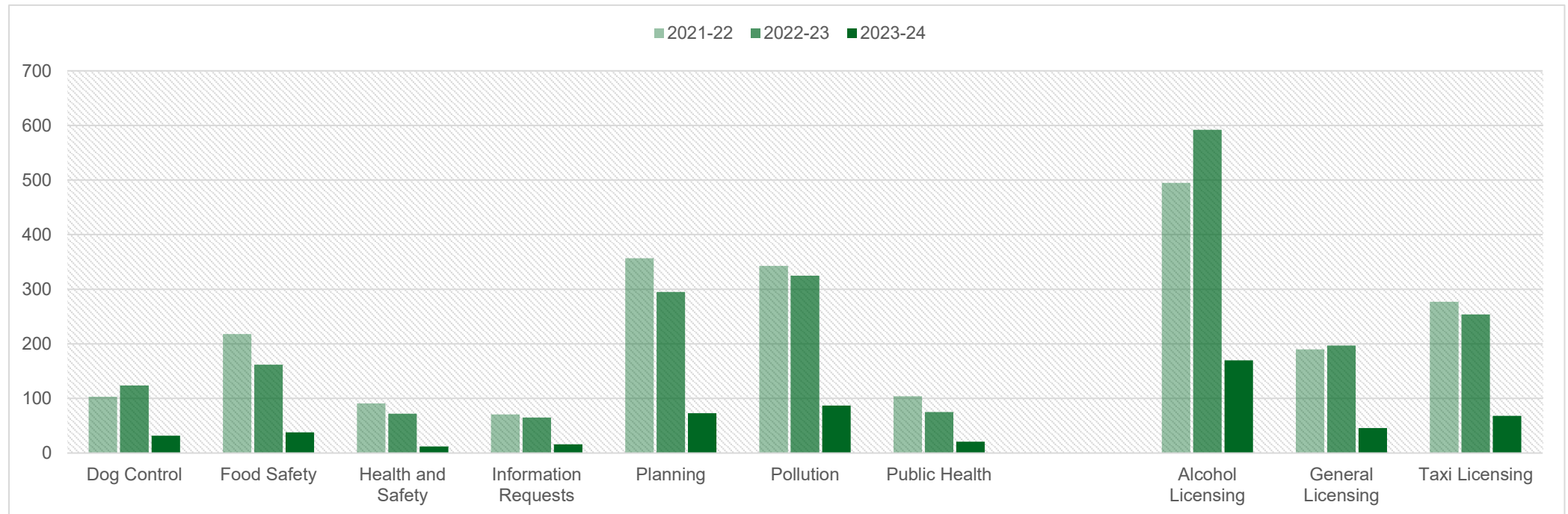
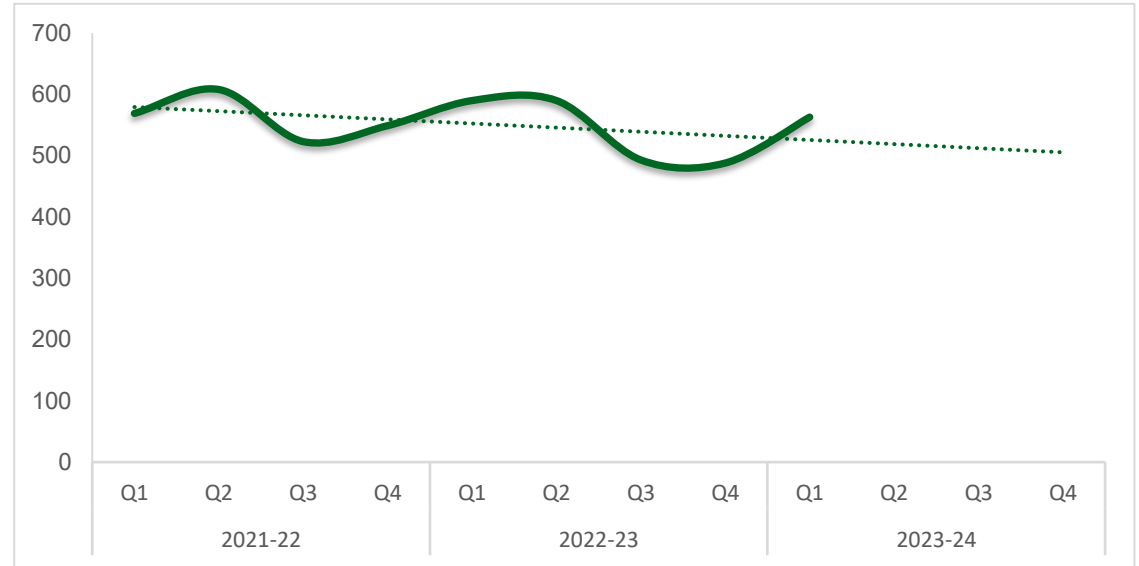
Of the 155 domestic treatments undertaken, approximately 65% have been due to issues with rats and 64% have been due to issues with pests at properties in the Redditch or Wychavon districts.



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.

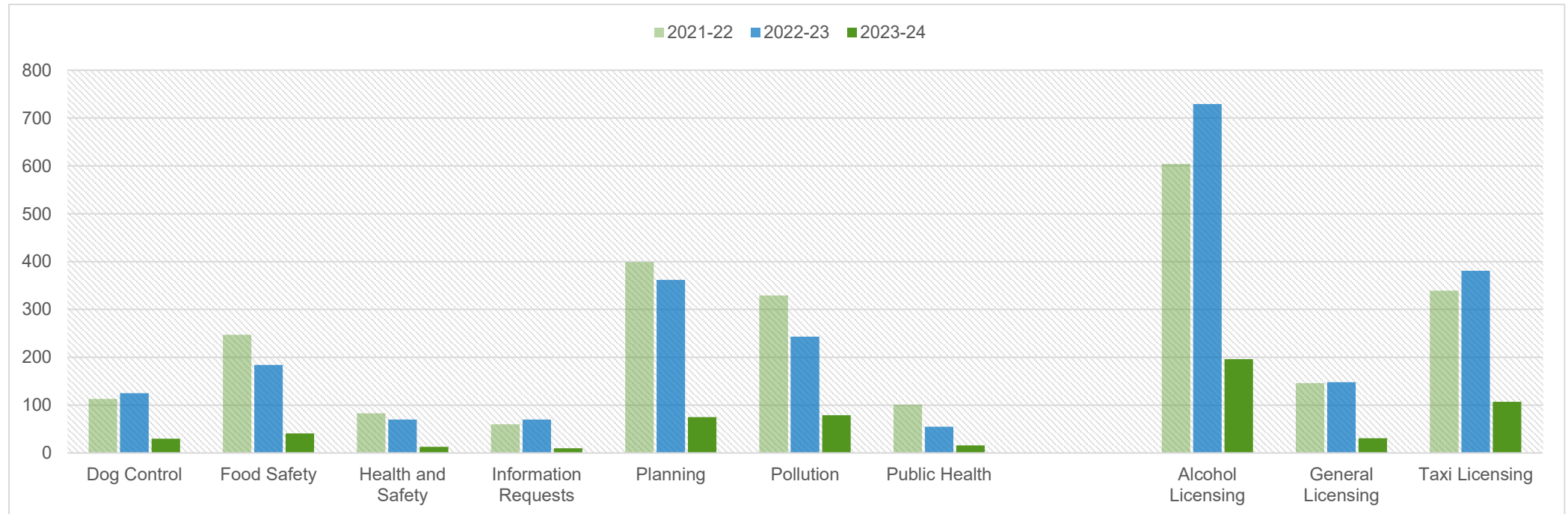
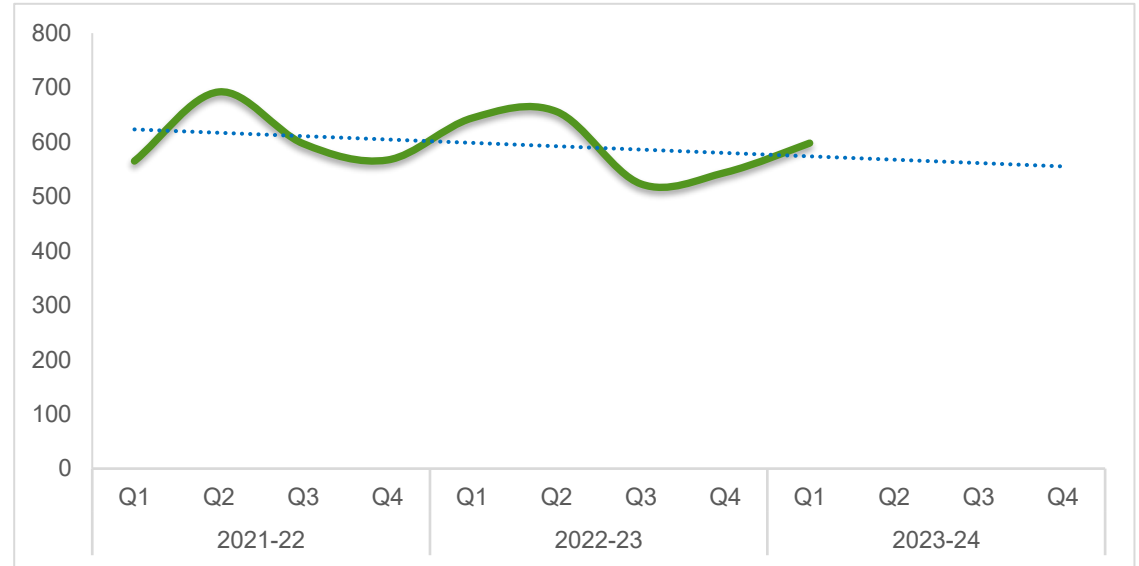
Note: The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS. The figures for the current year are cumulative and will continue to increase until the end of year report is published.



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.

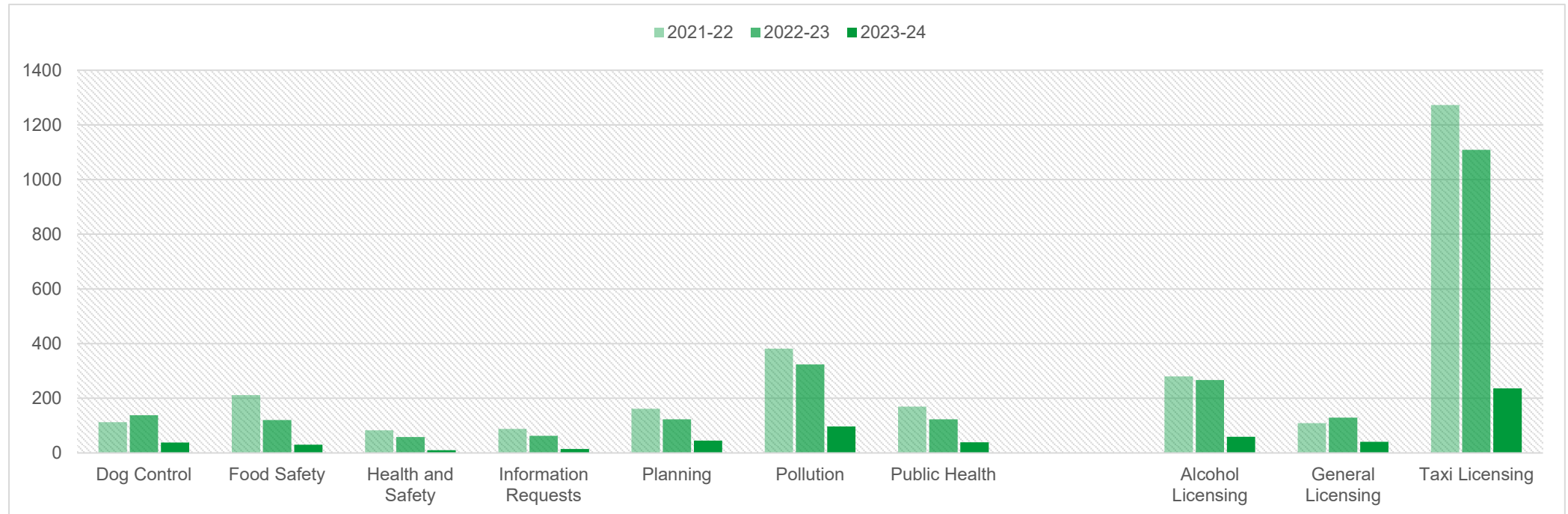
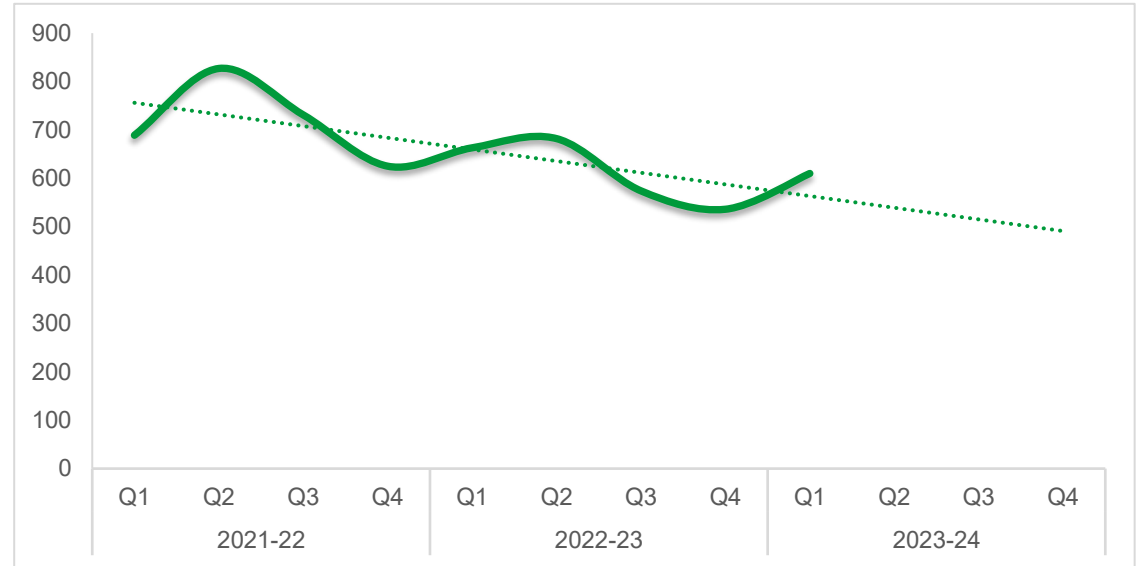
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Redditch

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.

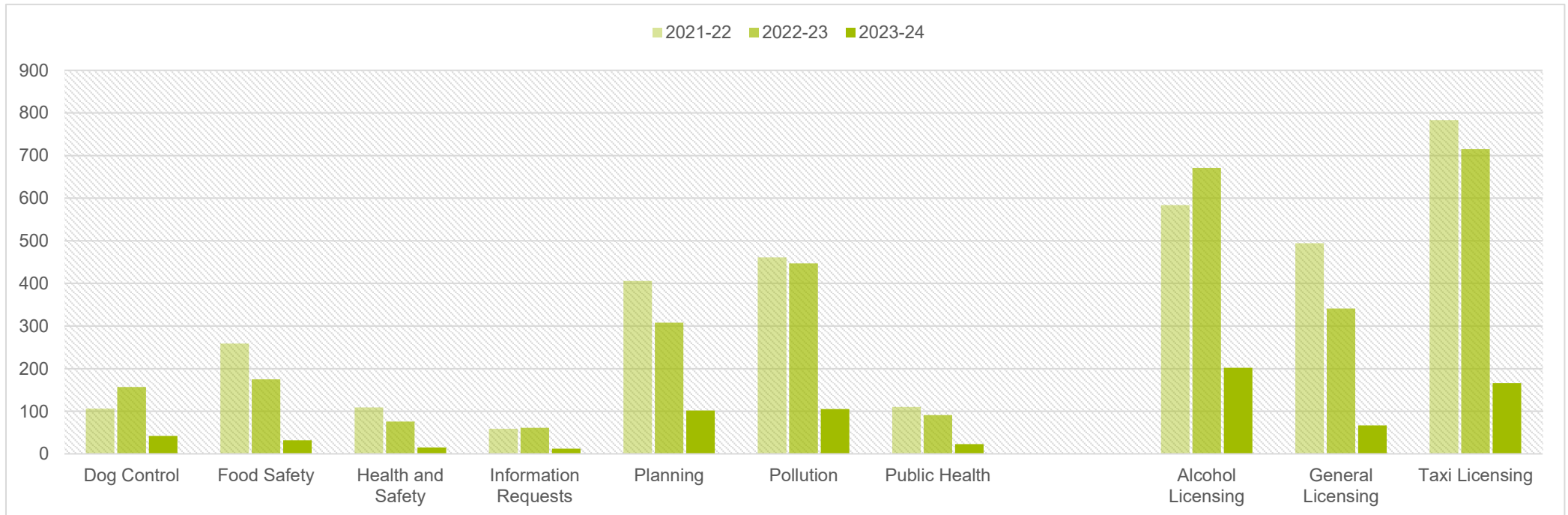
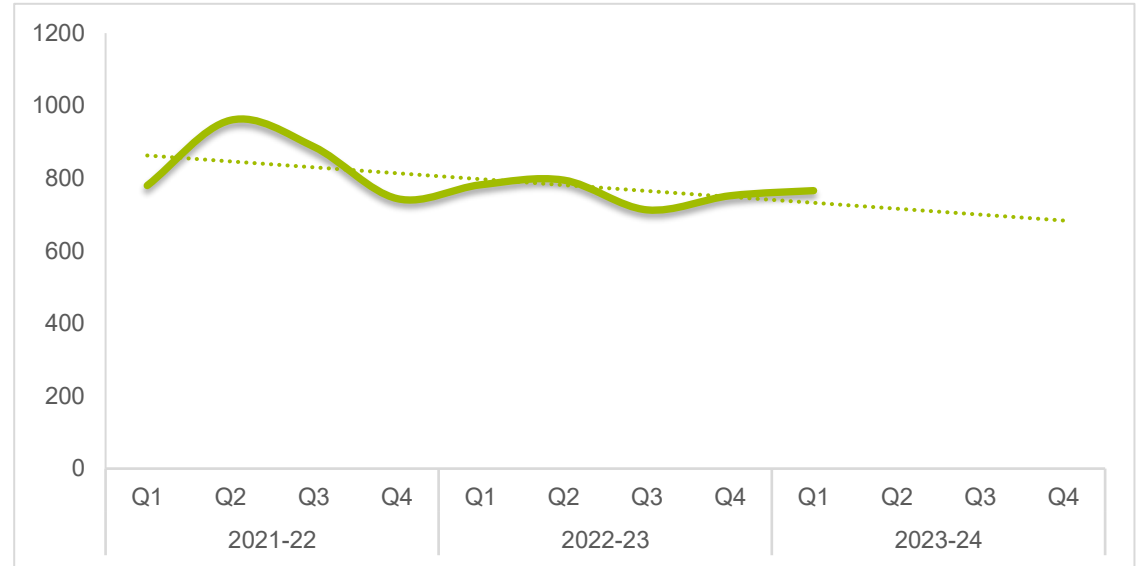
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Worcester City

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.

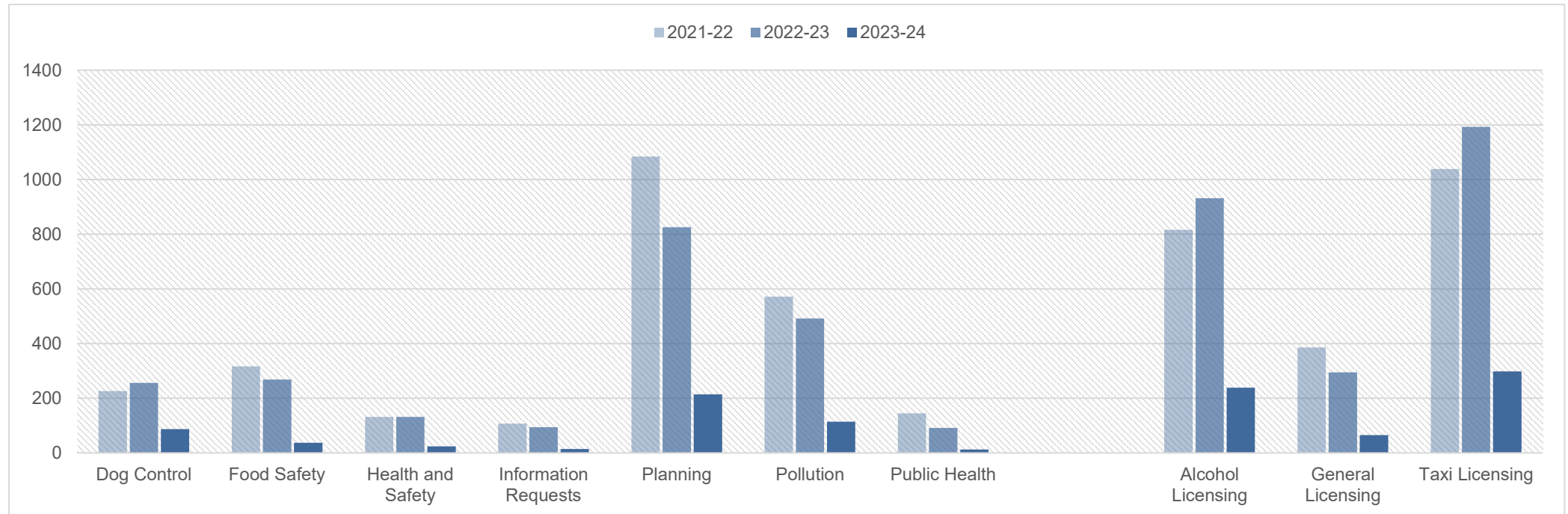
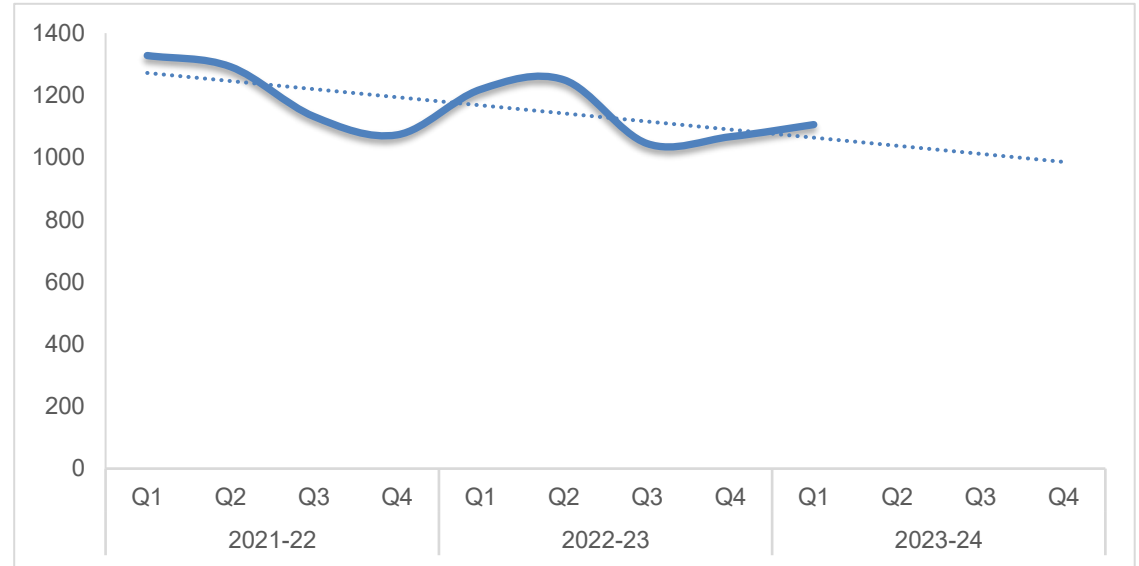
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Wychavon

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.

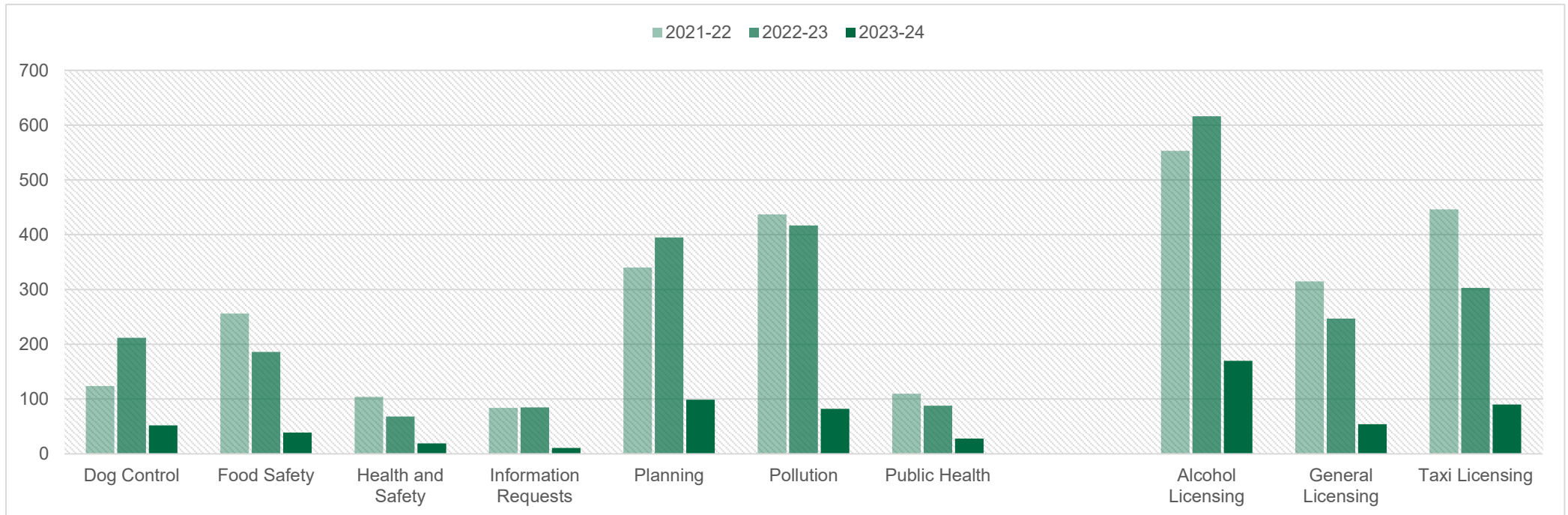
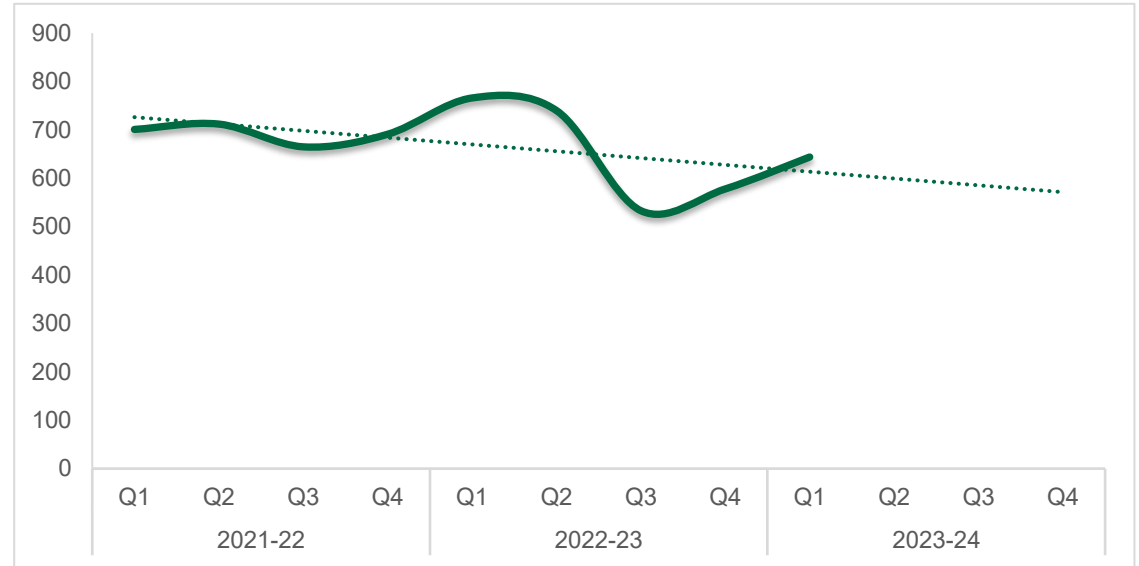
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Wyre Forest

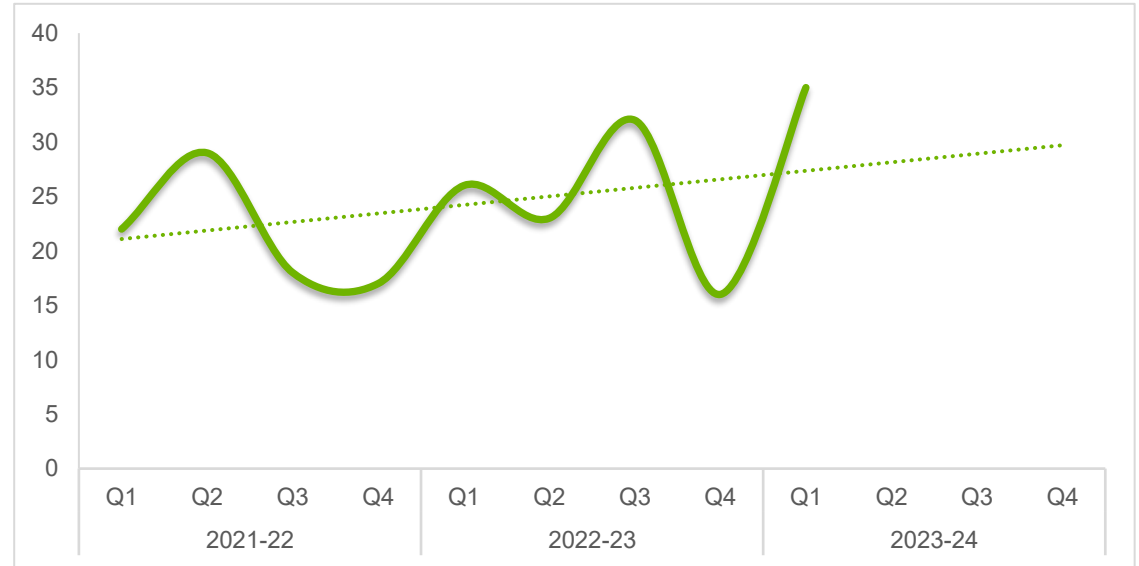
The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Wyre Forest district.

Note: The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS. The figures for the current year are cumulative and will continue to increase until the end of year report is published.



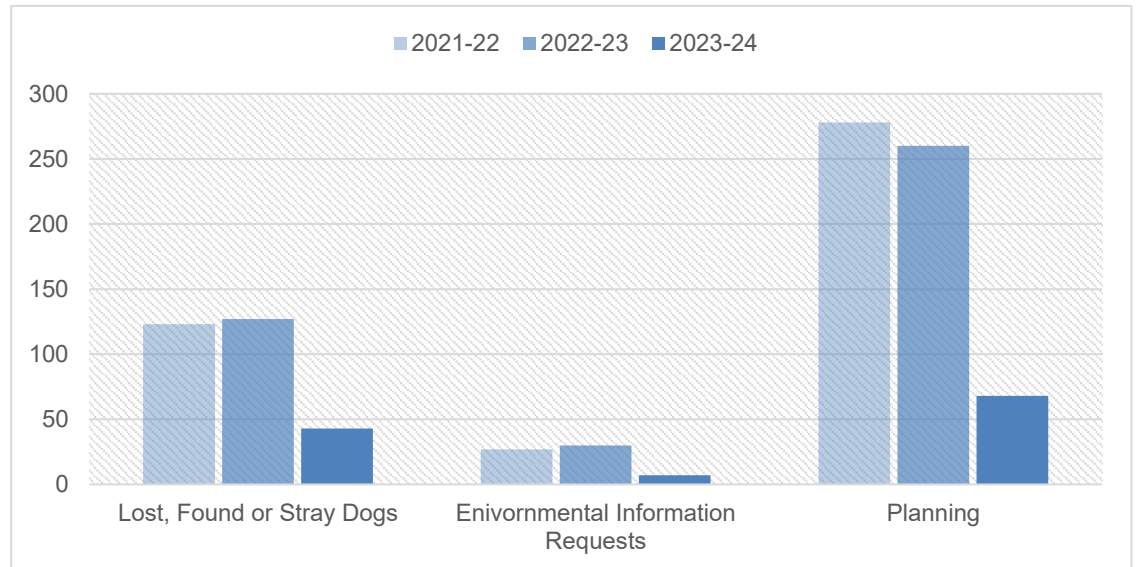
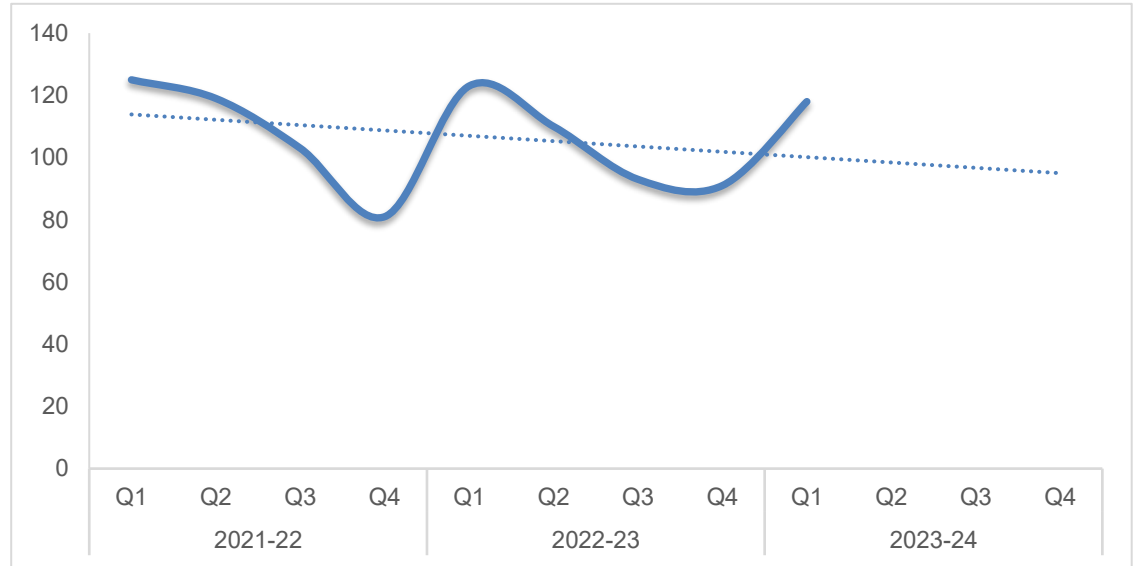
Cheltenham

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. Having said that, post-pandemic stray dog numbers have been increasing year on year following the issues widely reported about dog socialisation and anxiety since as well as the current cost of living crisis.



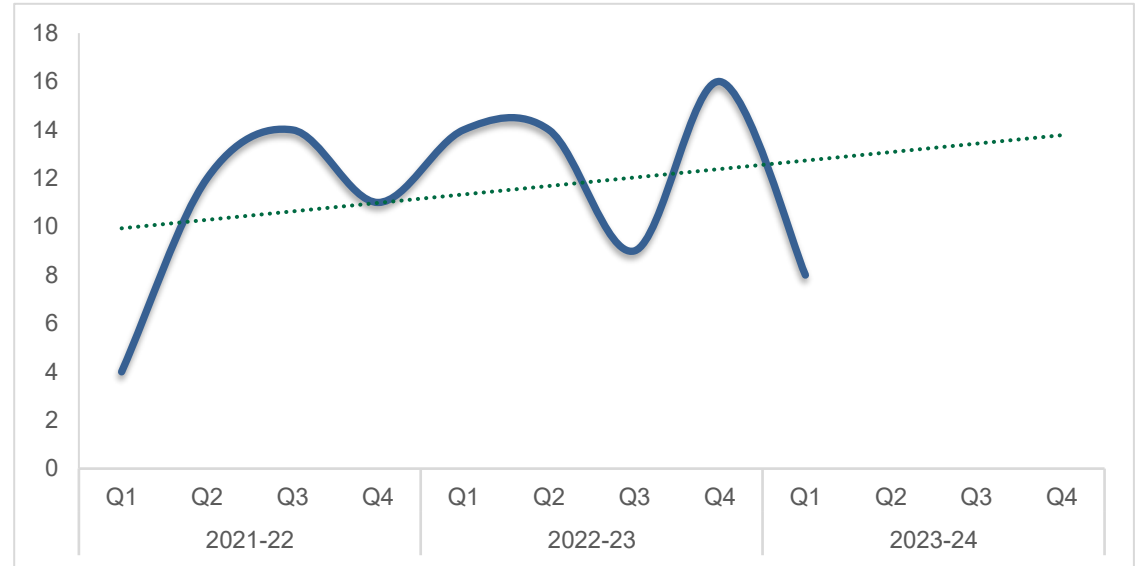
The dog control work undertaken for Gloucester City Council is part of a contract with two other Gloucestershire authorities to deliver the collection, kennelling, returning of dogs to owners and rehoming of stray dog functions. The contract was recently renewed and has been highly successful in reducing 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. The numbers of stray dogs are reducing annually, however, this is being closely monitored as the numbers are plateauing and there have been recent increases in the number of abandoned strays in other areas 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 in other areas 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 and has recently been providing Private Water supplies sampling and managerial support to the Environmental Protection team at Tewkesbury.

