

WRS Board

Date: 16th November 2023

Title: Activity and Performance Data Quarter 2 2023/24

Recommendation

That the Board notes the Report and that members use the contents of the activity data in their own reporting back to fellow members of the partner authorities.

Background

The detail of the report focuses on the second quarter of 2023/4, but the actual data allows comparison with previous quarters and previous years.

Contribution to Priorities

Board members have asked the service to provide data on activity levels to help reassure local members that WRS continues to address a range of issues in each partner area and more broadly across the county.

Report

Activity Data

The second quarter of 2023/4 was a relatively damp affair, which has impacted on at least one or two of our measures. Worcestershire has continued to be a draw for activities with a range of events and festivals continuing to feature and now we are beyond the pandemic, the crowds appear to be returning, but this is not to everyone's liking.

Although there was a rise in numbers of complaints and enquiries between Q1 and Q2, the overall number of food safety cases recorded by WRS during the year to date is a reduction of 37% compared to 2021-22, and a reduction of 11% 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 233 complaints recorded during quarter one, 71% have related to issues with products purchased from food businesses (e.g. poor quality food or the presence of foreign objects), whilst 29% have related to poor hygiene standards or practices.



Although there were significant pressures in the Community Environmental Health team through the Summer, 350 food interventions were completed and, of the 719 interventions conducted so far this year, at businesses included in the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS), 22 were rated as non-compliant (0, 1 or 2). Approximately three quarters of these ratings were issued to takeaways, restaurants, or pubs

Quarter 2 saw the rise in numbers of accidents reported slowing and the number of complaints and enquiries still increasing. Despite this, the number of health and safety at work cases recorded by WRS during the year to date is still 32% lower compared to 2021-22, and 18% compared to 2022-23. Approximately 46% of cases have been reports of accidents, with 79% of these cases relating to injuries where a worker was incapacitated for more than seven days or injuries to members of the public. As always seems to be the case, slips, trips, and falls (whether on the same level or from height) continue to be the most prominent cause of accidents occurring in workplaces.

Although applications were running more or less on trend, and complaints and enquiries were on the up, the overall number of licensing cases recorded by WRS during the year to date is an increase of 10% compared to 2021-22, but a reduction of 1% compared to 2022-23. This probably reflects the new post-pandemic normal and may be true for a number of our trends. Approximately 68% of cases have been applications and registrations; with 29% of these cases relating to private hire or hackney carriage vehicle licences and 27% relating to temporary events.

Most of the non-application work in Licensing tends to be general enquiries about licensing rather than complaints about licensed activity or unlicensed operators. Based on the 339 complaints recorded during the year to date, 149 have related to taxi licensing, 103 have related to alcohol licensing, and 68 have related to animal licensing (such as unlicensed dog breeding).

Numbers of planning enquiries fell during Q2 following an increase in Q1, however, for the year to date the total still represents a reduction of 30% compared to 2021-22, but an increase of 8% compared to 2022-23. Approximately 93% of enquiries have been consultations, whilst 45% have related to contaminated land. Around 16% of enquiries were completed, on a contractual basis, on behalf of other local authorities.

Interestingly, the number of information requests, which are often linked to the planning system, grew during quarter 2, so we may see an increase in planning work to follow this. Having said that, officers continue to report feeling that the number of general FOI requests has been higher than previously experienced.



Although the number of dog control (strays, lost dogs, etc) cases recorded by WRS fell from Q1 to Q2, overall, the figure during the year to date is an increase of 35% compared to 2021-22, but an increase of 9% compared to 2022-23. Approximately 90% of cases have related to stray or lost dogs, with 74% of these cases relating to "contained strays" (meaning dogs were found and held by a member of the public). Overall, 63% of strays have been reunited with their owners, however, figures vary significantly between local authorities. The increase in the number of stray dogs reported across Worcestershire contrasts with pre-pandemic levels which showed a long-term trend of decreasing numbers of stray dogs being reported to the Councils.

WRS receives a relatively low number of what the public might consider dog control complaints as opposed to strays. Based on the 37 complaints recorded during the year to date, 19 have related to dog fouling and persistent straying, 13 have related to dangerous dogs, and 5 have related to welfare.

The Summer is always a busy time for nuisance work, however the poor weather this year has probably led to a reduction in work volumes if not the complexity with the number of pollution cases recorded by WRS during the year to date representing a reduction of 24% compared to 2021-22, and 17% compared to 2022-23. It should be noted, however, that the better than usual Spring did lead to an earlier start in the increase in workload.

Approximately 77% of cases have related to noise nuisances, with noise from domestic properties (such as noise from barking dogs or from audio-visual equipment) the most prominent sources. A further 11% of cases have related to nuisances caused by smoke, fumes, and gases such as the burning of domestic waste or dust from construction sites.

Although the number off public health cases increased between Q1 and Q2, the overall number recorded by WRS during the year to date represents a reduction of 31% compared to 2021-22 but is consistent with the figures for 2022-23. Approximately 60% 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 actions of neighbouring residents or businesses. A further 25% of cases have been complaints relating to accumulations at domestic properties which can also include pest control issues.

Of the 413 domestic treatments undertaken during the year to date, approximately 41% have been due to issues with rats. Overall, a significant proportion of the demand arises from Redditch or Wychavon districts.



Performance

The non-business customer measure has fallen to 64.4% from 69.3% last quarter but remains above last year's out-turn figure of 59.2%. Heavy demands on resourcing in Community Environmental Health over the Summer meant we struggled to keep on top of nuisance complaints despite most officers being taken off proactive work to focus on nuisance complaints. Whilst almost 70% of people are happy with the speed of initial response, just under 60% are happy with the time it takes to reach a conclusion, but the biggest issue appears to be our inability to deliver the outcome people would like to see, which is most often down to public expectations not being met by what the law on nuisance allows for. This is probably also why the numbers reporting feeling better equipped to address issues for themselves in the future has fallen from 68.8% to 60%.

We also saw an unusual fall in business satisfaction this quarter, with the figure ending at 94.5%, two or three percentage points below where it has traditionally sat. Managers will be asked to look into this but behind the overall figure it seems likely that the main issues are with service requests from businesses rather than visits necessarily or perhaps officers have had to take more businesses to task over minor non-compliances during the Summer.

Compliments again significantly outnumber complaints.

Performance on processing complete driver license renewals was at 93.9%% for all authorities, which is lower than in previous years, although several individual authorities remained at 100%. Licensing was quite pressured during the Summer with staffing capacity so this slight downturn in performance is not unexpected.

The data on defective vehicles relates to situations where the vehicle is recorded as having been suspended either by the district garage on inspection or by an officer. This may follow a reported accident taking the vehicle outside the acceptable standards, or even when the vehicle is submitted for its routine 6-monthly check. In recent reporting periods we have seen an increase in the number of defective vehicles reported under this indicator, driven mainly by higher numbers in one of the six fleets. This has continued and, by the end of Q2 this year, 34 vehicles had been suspended in the period, with the majority belong to our one of our larger fleet areas. Even with this number, only 2.19% of the fleet county-wide are recorded as potentially problematic. More details appear in the table in appendix B at the end of the report. We will continue to re-enforce the need to ensure vehicles are always fit for use on the road with drivers and operators, and that the regular tests are not to be used



to assess what maintenance may be required.

Staff sickness has increased from 0.76 days per FTE to 1.42 days per FTE cumulative for the year. Current sickness levels are lower than the same period in the last 2 years (1.79, 1.55,) but above the year before that (0.94,) and significantly lower than the figures for 2019/20 (2.91,) and 2018/19 (2.77) at the same point in the year.

The overall rate of noise complaints against population is 0.79. This is slightly lower than the figure at Q2 in the most recent years (0.9, 1.08, 0.94 and 0.85, respectively.) Members will be aware that this measure has been significantly higher at this point in previous years, as high as 2.1 in 2017/18. It may be influenced by the slightly lower rate of complaint due to the poor summer weather.

The rate of hospitality businesses not upholding the 4 licensing objectives is 5%. This is roughly in line with 3 of the 5 previously recorded figures at this point (6.7%, 4.3%, 4.9%,) but above the 2.7% from last year and 2.8% seen in 2018/19. We know that, on occasion, one or other district can hit above 8%, but figures so far this year look like they are around the average and hopefully will continue in a similar vein.

Income brought in during the first half of 2023/24 is £204,718, which is slightly below last year (£232,520,) but still significantly up on the 2-years before this. Using the historic budget figure for 2016/17 (£3,017,000) to maintain the comparison with previous years, this comes out at 6.8% of that budget. Looking back at this point over recent years for comparison, the figures were 7.7%, 5.42%, 4.37%, 5.3% and 4.7% going back to 2018/19.

Contact Points

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Background Papers

Appendix A: Activity Report (separate document), Appendix B below



Appendix B: Performance indicator table 2023/4

Indicator	Reporting period	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4/ Outrun
1. % of service requests where resolution is achieved to customers satisfaction	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	69.3	64.4		
2. % of service requests where resolution is achieved to business satisfaction	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	97	94.5		
3. % businesses broadly compliant at first assessment/ inspection	Annually	98.4	Bromsgrove 99.3 Malvern Hills 98.6 Redditch 98.3 Worcester City 99.5 Wychavon 98.7 Wyre Forest 97.5 Worcestershire 98.7		Bromsgrove Malvern Hills Redditch Worcester City Wychavon Wyre Forest Worcestershire
4. % of food businesses scoring 0,1 or 2 at 1 st April each year	Annually	1.6	Bromsgrove 0.7 Malvern Hills 1.4 Redditch 1.7 Worcester City 0.5 Wychavon 1.5 Wyre Forest 2.5 Worcestershire 1.3		Bromsgrove Malvern Hills Redditch Worcester City Wychavon Wyre Forest Worcestershire
5 % of drivers licence renewal applications issued within 5 working days of receipt of a complete application	6-monthly	NA	93.9	NA	
6 % of vehicles found to be defective whilst in service Number of vehicles found to be defective by district and the percentage this represents of the fleet county-wide.	6-monthly	NA	34 = 2.19% of 1550 vehicles on the road county-wide BDC 4 MHDC 2 RBC 18 WC 7 WDC 0 WFDC 3	NA	



7 % of service requests where customer indicates they feel better equipped to deal with issues themselves in future	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	68.8	60		
8 Review of register of complaints/compliments	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	4/33	7/59		
9 Annual staff sickness absence at public sector average or better	Quarterly NB: figure is cumulative	0.76 days per FTE	1.42 days per FTE		
10 % of staff who enjoy working for WRS	Annually	NA	NA	NA	
11 % of licensed businesses subject to allegations of not upholding the 4 licensing objectives	6-monthly	NA	Bromsgrove 6.8 Malvern Hills 2.3 Redditch 3.0 Worcester City 6.9 Wychavon 1.4 Wyre Forest 6.6 Worcestershire 5.0	NA	Bromsgrove Malvern Hills Redditch Worcester City Wychavon Wyre Forest Worcestershire
12 Rate of noise complaint per 1000 head of population	6-monthly	NA	Bromsgrove 0.71 Malvern Hills 0.65 Redditch 0.57 Worcester City 0.97 Wychavon 0.72 Wyre Forest 0.86 Worcestershire 0.79	NA	Bromsgrove Malvern Hills Redditch Worcester City Wychavon Wyre Forest Worcestershire
13 Total income expressed as a % of district base revenue budget (16/17)	6-monthly	NA	£204,718, which is 6.8% as a proportion of the 2016/17 revenue budget figure (£3,017,000)	NA	
14 Cost of regulatory services per head of population (Calculation will offset income against revenue budget)	Annually	NA	NA	NA	



