

Worcestershire
Regulatory Services

Supporting and protecting you

Activity Report | 2023-24



Bromsgrove
District Council
www.bromsgrove.gov.uk



Malvern Hills
District Council
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District Council

Foreword

Welcome to the third 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 October to 31st December 2023, but the graphs and tables allow comparison with the data in previous quarters and years. One thing you will see is that each quarter point has a number against the graph line to show the number of matter that this refers to. This came up at Board and we hope this change more informative than trying to compare things on the y-axis scale.

Stray dog numbers increased slightly from Q2 but did not get back to the peak in Q1. Following a fall in dog control complaints last quarter, we have seen a jump back up towards the peak seen in Q2 of 2022/3. Overall this year, dog control complaints are currently higher than in either of the previous two years.

Food cases (complaints and enquiries,) fell slightly on the peak on Q2 and remains above the trend line, however overall numbers in 2023/4 are lower than in the previous 2-years. A good number (over 350,) food interventions under FHRS also took place. The uptick in the number of accidents reported continued to plateau this quarter and numbers of complaints and enquiries on health and safety fell slightly.

Information requests remained relatively unchanged between Q2 and Q3, but are higher than in Q1. Requests for support in the planning system increased slightly but in line with if slightly above the trend line. It looks like 2023/4 will be busier than last year for planning support but we appear unlikely to reach the high of 2021/2.

Licensing application work continues to follow previous trends, at levels close to what would be anticipated, but complaints and enquiries was up again. Overall numbers are likely to exceed 2022/3 but may not get to the levels seen in 2021/2.

Pollution and nuisance complaints followed their usual seasonal downward trend from Q2 throughout Q3. Overall numbers appear lower this year because of the relatively poor Summer weather, but this did follow on from a good Spring, which meant increases in workload had started earlier. Looking at the figures, Q3 seems to have been more or less on a par with previous years. This demonstrates what I have always said about nuisance complaint levels appearing inextricably linked to the weather. Public Health related complaints (accumulations, vermin, public burials, etc,) fell this quarter, heading back towards the trend line.

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

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.

Quarter Two

Worcestershire has continued to be a draw for activities with a wide range of events and festivals either taking place or being organised in this reporting period. Officers were proactively involved in chairing Safety Advisory Groups (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. In Quarter 2 these included The Upton Blues Festival, The Battle of Evesham event, the Worcester Victoria Christmas Fayre preparations and pre-season meetings for both Bromsgrove Sporting and Kidderminster Harriers football clubs.

WRS provides a contracted service to the County Council in respect of that authority's Safety at Sports Grounds responsibilities. This work resulted in General Safety Certificates being issued to Kidderminster Harriers FC, Bromsgrove Sporting FC and Sixways stadium in Q2. We shall be informing you further of our Safety at Sports Grounds and Safety Advisory Group activities by way of an information report to be presented at your February Board meeting.

The team also engaged in proactive compliance work in respect of The Sunshine, App Fest and Drunken Monkey festivals.

Despite significant demand on the team throughout the Summer, we still conducted 350 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. A Simple Caution was issued to a non-compliant bakery in Kidderminster for a failure to keep the premises clean and in good repair and condition, failure to store raw materials and ingredients appropriately, inadequate procedures in place to control pests and lack of training and food safety procedures.

The Food Standards Agency has shown an interest in the food safety work we carry out on your behalf, and we engaged with them during the period to provide assurance as to the interventions we have completed and those we have planned for the rest of the year. Your Officers have also been successful in attracting another major national food manufacturer into a primary authority agreement, whereby WRS provides assured advice for which we can charge as part of our income generation activities.

The investigations into a fatality in Redditch where an employee suffered an anaphylactic shock, the fatality concerning a member of the public participating in a white-collar boxing event in Worcester and the serious accident in Worcester where a member of the public fell down a lift shaft are all ongoing.

The better than usual Spring weather led to an earlier start in the increase in workload and the Summer is always a busy time for nuisance work. Notices were served in respect of a defective drainage system in Bromsgrove and an extract ventilation system to food premises causing noise and odour nuisance to residents in Worcester.

The team continues to contribute to the Serious Organised Crime Partnerships across the county through North Worcestershire MATES, MAT-G Worcester and MAT-G Malvern & Worcester.

This activity report serves to illustrate the diversity and complexity of work carried out by the team, and the depth and range of expertise required.

Quarter Three

The team continues to work with businesses to limit future potential noise nuisance from music at pubs and clubs that were reported as being problematic during the summer. We are proactively seeking specific agreements aimed at limiting disturbances to residents for the coming season. As part of our intelligence gathering outside of the hectic summer period, CEH and Licensing officers worked together in carrying out a series of monitoring visits to Bewdley targeted at premises having pre-identified issues.

Officers met with the operators of a local pub that has live music in the beer garden to advise them how to avoid potential noise nuisance to neighbours and the team were also able to resolve the noise nuisance caused by dogs barking at a commercial kennels without the need for prosecution.

A bakery in Kidderminster was issued with a Simple Caution in October for contraventions of the Food Safety & Hygiene Regulations. The food business operator had failed to keep the premises clean and in good repair and had failed to provide food handlers with adequate supervision and training in food hygiene. Officers were also involved in Worcester's Victorian Fayre inspections where drops in compliance standards were found. One trader from the London area who has caused problems previously was again found unsatisfactory and will not be accepted back in 2024.

The Food Standards Agency escalated its intervention into our food safety management Covid recovery programme and a report on this is contained within your Board papers.

Whilst food businesses are continuing to close citing staffing and financial issues, we continue to receive some 70 new registrations each month. There is a noticeable swing to home based and mobile catering activities rather than high street operations. Another development on the food front is businesses registering multiple trading names at one premises address, an activity which can extend their presence on platforms such as Just Eat and Deliveroo. The approved national Food Standards Agency IT systems are yet to catch up and are not designed to cope with this approach. We are aware of this and are ahead of the game in terms of collecting and recording intelligence on such premises on our own systems.

Our health and safety investigations into two fatalities, carried out in collaboration with West Mercia Police and the Coroner's Office, continue. The team are also investigating a very serious incident involving a person who received serious injuries when a lift's safety mechanisms failed to operate.

Our Health & Safety lead presented the annual report to the Planning and regulatory Committee of Worcestershire County Council regarding the activities that WRS carries out on their behalf in respect of safety at sports grounds. An information report to advise members of this work is planned for a future Board meeting. Other activities in this area included facilitating the Safety Advisory Groups for events being planned at Worcestershire County Cricket Ground and the Christmas Charity convoy, and the issue of a new General Safety Certificate for one of our local football clubs.

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.

Quarter Two

The Licensing team have continued to see a upward trajectory in both enquiries and applications as expected towards the summer months. The team actually had more queries regarding TENs applications and submissions in this period than the last two years so resources were prioritised accordingly.

Licensing Committees and sub committees across all six districts also commenced this quarter and all had quite a few new members undertaking Licensing for the first time so it was positive to see the changes made by the team to the Member's training had worked well.

There were two zoo inspections carried out by the team this quarter. One follow up at All things Wild and then the much larger annual joint inspection at West Midlands Safari Park which always involves a lot of pre-planning and takes places of a two day period. Both inspections went well with officers working with CEH colleagues and DEFRA on the West Midlands Safari Park to ensure compliance, licensing and health and safety requirements were being met accordingly.

There have been a number of joint visits taking place across the county with West Mercia Police Work to address issues identified in the Night Time economy (NTE) many of which have been resolved and not requiring further investigation. Those that have required extra monitoring have involved both the licensing and environmental health team working together with the police to conduct further monitoring of the situation.

The caravan inspections required to be undertaken in Wychavon and Worcester City were undertaken however there has been some follow up work that has been required to address non compliance. These remain ongoing with planning colleagues being consulted as and where necessary.

Animal Licensing work continues with both inspections and proactive monitoring. A result of such monitoring was a warrant being executed by the police and joint enforcement action being taken with licensing officers under both the Animal Welfare Act and the DWA (Dangerous Wild Animals Act) found a number of wild animals being kept (both dead and alive) at an address in the County. Licensing officers will now be taking formal action in this matter. Dog breeding complaints continue and are initially investigated by the Intelligence Team.

Quarter Three

Officers always see a small decline in applications at this time of year with a small spike just before Christmas. By this time all TENs for the Christmas period have already been submitted however queries and requests for service continue to rise which is not surprising based on previous years. The team having been working collectively with the Intelligence team and Technical Services team to consider a more effective way of handling licensing queries. This being done in parallel with the implementation of Victoria Form so we hope that more queries can be directed to self help in the future.

In Animal licensing a higher focus has been on carrying out inspections that the team slipped behind on in the summer periods. After the pandemic there was a decline in businesses renewing their licence but this has slowly returned back to pre-pandemic levels with renewals and new applications being submitted. In response to this the team have had to move resource around in the team to deal with this and are looking at how to deal with this area of working moving forward. In the background work on illegal dog breeding continues with the Intelligence team and officers have been attending meetings with colleagues nationally to review the current LIAR Regulations.

Taxi Compliance checks have continued in the County and with the increase in complaints of Wolverhampton licenced vehicles coming into the county the team have conducted one operation in Redditch where a number of vehicles were stopped and warnings given and another operation is being planned in Worcester City. Alongside these operations routine night time enforcement with partners continue and where issues are found these are followed up appropriately.

Work with businesses in the Night time economy continues and officers have recently been supporting Worcester BID in their efforts to make Worcester safe in the evening particularly for the vulnerable and women and girls with their project Worcester Safe Space. Officers have also been working with partners looking at a number of complaints in the Bewdley area and have deployed a NTE model to address these. If this is successful it will be a model that will be rolled out to deal with similar situations in the NTE.

Finally officers ended the quarter assisting colleagues in CEH and Worcester City with the Victorian Fayre which was a success as previous years.

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.

Quarter Two

Air quality

The contract to secure the purchase of 26 Air Quality Monitors (mainly funded by a Defra Grant) was agreed and detailed conversations on the proposed locations of the monitors have been completed.

We received notification from DEFRA that they are to commence enforcement of the Local Air Quality Management regime for the 4 areas of Worcestershire that have existing Air Quality Management areas (Worcester City, Bromsgrove, Wyre Forest and Wychavon) but do not have a recently updated or reviewed Air Quality Action Plan in place. A significant amount of work towards production of the Air Quality Action Plans and a County-wide Air Quality Strategy has been undertaken already. For Worcester progress has been in conjunction with Senior Officers at Worcestershire County Council Highways and Worcester City Council who jointly chair the Air Quality Steering Group. The 3 subgroups based on Transport & Planning, Public Health and Sustainability subject areas have developed to bring forward measures for the AQAP process.

Planning and Permitting Processes

Our environmental health planning work for the 6 Worcestershire Districts plus Gloucester City and Tewkesbury continued including for Amcor Flexibles (Evesham) who upgraded their Regenerative Thermal Oxidizer (RTO) in September to comply with the new lower Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC) emission limit of 20mg/m². This was undertaken over two weeks during which the RTO was off-line. Notification letters were delivered to local residents and due to the communication programme, no complaints of odour were received by Amcor nor WRS. Also in Wychavon, Modern Packaging committed to installing a RTO to replace their bio-scrubber following the service of an Enforcement Notice relating to VOC emissions. A new Environmental Permit has been granted to Kaug Refinery Services (Redditch) for their Part B precious metals recovery activity and WRS will be representing the Borough Council by attending the County Planning Committee at the end of November for this matter. Finally, an updated Environmental Permit has been issued for Doncaster Castings (Wychavon).

For Gloucester as a commercial contract, a significant amount of work has been ongoing for A2 for solvent impregnation Permitting Application including a request for further information notice, preparation for a Committee Hearing and drafting the permit to operate.

Contaminated Land

Our contaminated land related work for the 6 Worcestershire Districts, Gloucester City and South Gloucestershire Councils continued throughout this period, including responding to a wide variety of planning consultations and discharge of conditions requests, providing responses to environmental information requests in relation to property sales and development sites, consultants enquiries and other requests for service as required. Our work continues to involve a lot of complex sites with various historical land uses which are dealt with via the planning process in each of the district areas. Examples of these sites include:-

Contract Chemicals in Gloucester which has seen numerous phases of ground investigation and assessment over the years as part of the proposed residential development. The latest involvement related to finalisation of gas protection measures to be installed in a number of the residential properties.

A small residential development on a former Nursey site in Cookhill with updated and revised site assessment.

Site on Chester Road in Kidderminster being developed for residential housing – review of site assessment and remediation strategy required due to historical underground fuel storage tanks and associated infrastructure that had given rise to a number of hotspots of hydrocarbon contamination.

We also continue to review the weekly planning lists for the Worcestershire District Councils which often flags up other applications requiring comment in respect of contamination that would otherwise be missed. One example includes a 16 dwelling development on a former historic nursery site in Sedgeberrow where various unknown tanks were present, and various applications for new build developments and extensions in areas where there were former factories or in close proximity to former landfill sites or other areas of unknown filled ground.

During this time we also added an ongoing contract with East Staffordshire Borough Council to our portfolio of work to assist them with their contaminated land planning work. This came about through one of the Contaminated Land Officer Groups where we represent WRS. We continue to show a presence at West Mercia, Gloucestershire, and Staffordshire groups which proves to be a great source for networking, information sharing and training.


WRS have updated a number of documents on the website in relation to a site determined as contaminated land in Redditch following interaction with one of the homeowners. This was to help clarify the information presented on the website and demonstrate the history of the properties including remediation.

A number of national and local consultations have also been responded to during this time including National Brownfield Forum review and screening of additional sites for the Bromsgrove District Council Plan Review.

Work has also begun on drafting the Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy for the 6 Worcestershire Districts to the update previous versions that are now somewhat out of date.


Dog Warden Service

Sadly during Q2 we had four dead dogs reported as dumped. All were different breeds and we have gone public with the details to try and identify the owners and wider circumstances of these cases, with a view to taking enforcement action where appropriate. With so many difficulties with dogs post COVID our Senior Dog Warden, Pip Griffin was invited to Parliament to provide evidence to MPs in the Pet Abuse and Welfare Committee Inquiry into the post-pandemic health and welfare concerns of companion animals, including abuse and mutilation. We were the only Local Authority representative invited to provide oral evidence and our session was alongside the RSPCA and Local Government Association. Pip was able to provide first hand experience of the failings and frustrations of the current regulatory regime. Subjects such as dog breeding, animal welfare, ear cropping and tail docking were discussed.

HOMEEVENT GUIDEHELPSEARCH

PLAYER

Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee
Tuesday 5 September 2023 Meeting started at 2.31pm, ended 5.09pm



AGENDAINDEX

14:31:17

Subject: Pet welfare and abuse

14:31:18

Witness(es): Dr Samantha Gaines, Head of Companion Animals, RSPCA; Pip Griffin, Senior Dog Warden, Worcestershire Regulatory Services; Marisa Heath, Adviser, Local Government and Animal Welfare Group

15:44:45

Witness(es): Bill Lambert, Health Welfare and Breeder Services Executive, The Kennel Club; Dr Gudrun Ravetz, Chief Veterinary Officer, Pets at Home; Alexandra Baker, Chief Operating Officer, Pet Industry Federation

Planning Enforcement

The team have received 61 new cases from Bromsgrove and Redditch to investigate alleged breaches of control in this period. Existing caseloads also keep the team busy and where negotiation and for four cases informal approaches have been exhausted and warning letters being issued. A warning letter is the last resort requesting compliance in a set period of time before consideration of the next stage which is an enforcement action. The team issued two enforcement notices at sites across the two districts for noncompliance of complex matters. On one site the issue is unauthorised deposit of hardcore and subsequent creation of hardstanding to store machinery on in the green belt. The other site related to the creation of a stable block, associated hardstanding and gates. In both these circumstances all avenues of negotiation were exhausted and all elements of the enforcement notice required planning permission which they did not have. The team continues to support the Councils with their backlog of active cases

Homes for Ukraine Support Workers

As of July, the current 3 remaining COVID Advisor team members are continuing to assist with the Homes for Ukraine scheme as support workers in Bromsgrove and Redditch Council areas. Early July the team began the preparation for the Delta Return ready for completion at the end of July, for this process we needed to collate the data on our guests on the Homes for Ukraine scheme for the Home Office so that the Councils receive the correct funding for Q1. Also, in July we received notice from Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) of an additional homelessness grant for Homes for Ukraine. This means we have been able to put together more assistance to those on the scheme looking for independent accommodation in move into private rental accommodation, called “move on funding”.

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 currently 37 families still with hosts, 12 families who have moved into social housing and 28 families that have moved into private rental accommodation.

IT Development

As well as our normal day to day work, we have been involved in numerous projects in each of the service's teams to enhance service delivery. This quarter we did extensive preparation work with our Host IT and back-office support company with the aim of introducing a new and improved mapping system. The initial preparation stage was completed in this quarter, and most of the subsequent installation work is planned for the following quarter. This is an upgrade to the mapping used by many of the teams using geographical based information to complete tasks, such as contaminated land or planning support. We have been involved with other projects such as the Automation project and introduction of Taxi digital Identity records.

We have continued to provide Uniform support functions, development and training for others as commercial contracts. We currently do this for Bromsgrove and Redditch Council's Planning department, and for Tewkesbury Borough Council's Environmental Health and Licensing departments and Worcestershire County Council's Trading Standards team.

Quarter Three

Air Quality

Our work towards an updated Air Quality Action Plan for Worcester City continued apace with monthly meetings of the Air Quality Steering Group as well as separate technical groups for Public Health, Planning, Transport and Sustainability. Defra have agreed to extensions on the deadline for submission of Air Quality Action Plans for Worcester, Wyre Forest, Bromsgrove and Wychavon with much work still to be completed ahead of this.

Progress organising the installation of 26 real time air quality monitors continued including contract negotiations for the structural stability and electrical sockets required for installation. The monitors were agreed for installation in early January 2024 with the development of a bespoke web-portal to follow. A 3 year fixed-term air quality behaviour change post to link in with this project was also advertised and closed to applicants in mid-January 2024.

Planning and Permitting Processes

For permitted processes, a new A2 solvent Impregnation permit was approved by Gloucester Licensing Committee on 20th November which officers from WRS attended to give technical guidance to Gloucester City Council under contract. Following the issuing of the permit, subsequent weekly meetings have taken place subsequently to discuss compliance with the outstanding BAT Conclusion compliance and a small number of noise complaints linked to the site.

A revised A2 permit for the brick manufacturing activities at Wienerberger's Hartlebury Work was issued. Applications were received and processes for Concrete Plants in Gloucester and Malvern Hills together with a new Petrol Filling Station in Gloucester.

Contaminated Land

Whilst not Worcestershire, interesting sites that have recently been dealt with under income generation contracts include the National Brewery Centre in Burton on Trent, where an existing museum and archive is being converted into their office Headquarters. Another is the redevelopment of a former Debenhams site in Gloucester where excavation of the courtyard a crypt and 114 skeletons were unearthed at much shallower depths than expected. This now means all earthworks are being undertaken in the presence of an archaeologist. This and other restrictions on site have impacted some of the contaminated land investigations and required more input from WRS to help address outstanding issues. WRS have been consulted on some retrospective planning applications that can present issues in terms of contaminated land as it is more difficult to undertake suitable assessment on sites that have been developed. If significant risks are encountered requiring further works it would be much more challenging, if not impossible, to implement certain remediation techniques or mitigation in these cases and have significant cost implications. For this reason contaminated land conditions are pre-commencement requiring suitable assessment to be undertaken prior to development. It is understood one of the cases is with planning enforcement due to a number of different issues.

COVID Advisors (Homes for Ukraine Support Workers)

From October, the current 2 remaining COVID Advisors continued to assist with the Homes for Ukraine scheme along with a Principal Officer managing the scheme in Bromsgrove and Redditch.

In early October the team began the preparation for the Delta Return ready for completion at the end of the month, for this process we needed to collate the data on our guests on the Homes for Ukraine scheme for the Home Office so that the Councils receive the correct funding for Q2. In November we received notice from Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) the extension of “thank you” payments into the third year for Homes for Ukraine sponsors across the UK, with the payment remaining at £500 per month. 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 36 families still with hosts, we had 8 new arrivals in Q3.

IT Development

Work continues with several projects which cover all the teams within the service aimed to enhance service delivery. This quarter we worked with our IT host to complete the move to a new mobile phone service provider, which will produce significant savings. We also worked with our IT host to introduce a new cyber security awareness and training system, which is all part of keeping the service cyber safe. We have continued our work on the introduction of a new mapping system and a complete refresh of our gazetteer. The service gazetteer is used to enable different service elements to have sight of each other's involvement and ensure efficiency and consideration for wider service provision.

Dog Warden Service

During Q3 the dog warden service began to see an big impact on the service following the new government legislation that meant XL Bully's would become a banned breed. The dog wardens have regrettably had to put to sleep 18 dogs during this 3 month period, in 2022 we only had 6 dogs we had to euthanise in the entire year. This is due to a combination of XL Bully's being dumped and some serious welfare cases where dogs had to be put to sleep for animal welfare. In October the service picked up a dog in one of the worst conditions we have ever seen, a young Staffordshire bull terrier that was starved, could barely stand, emaciated, covered in sores, scabs and mange, with overgrown nails and suffering from anaemia. Then, at Christmas we picked up 2 puppies that had been dumped in a plastic bag in freezing conditions. The process of finding charities who will take dogs for rehoming is also taking longer and proving more difficult due to charities and rescues being overrun.

Planning Enforcement

The team have received 61 new cases from Bromsgrove and Redditch to investigate alleged breaches of control during this period and have secured an injunction in relation to a problematic site which is a first for WRS's planning enforcement officers and not a decision taken lightly. Cross working with other teams and outside agencies on some of the more complex cases has proved invaluable in tackling wider issues and concerns.

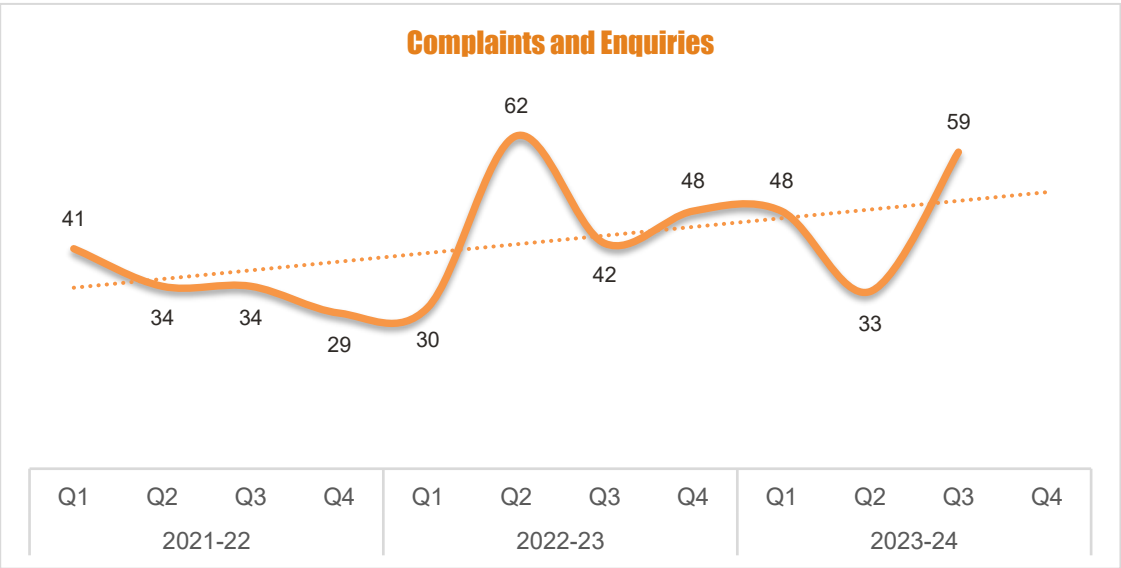
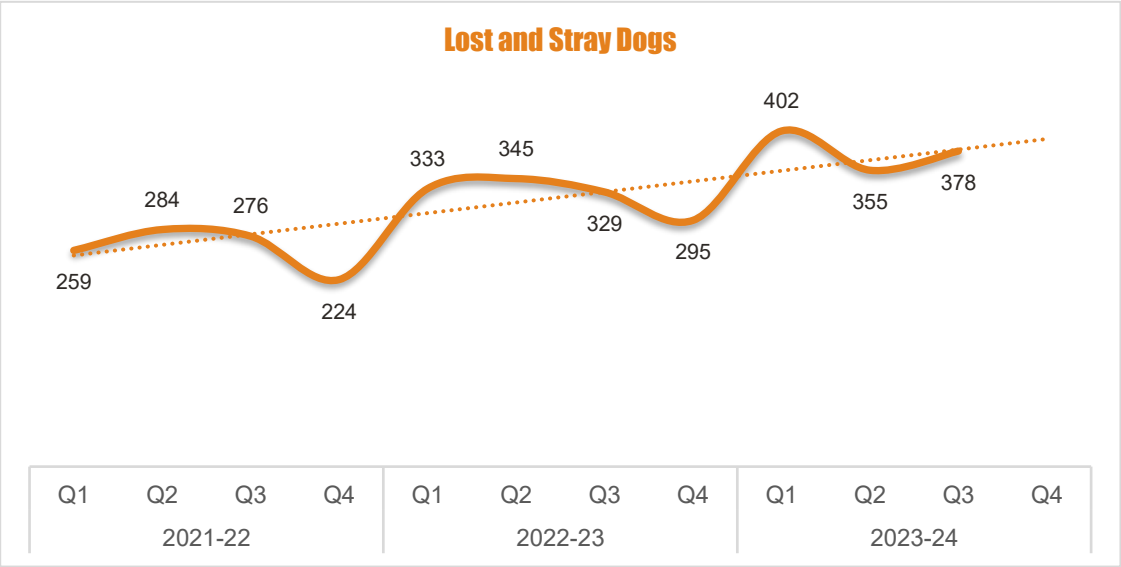
Dog Control

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 dog control cases recorded by WRS during the year to date is an increase of 37% compared to 2021-22, but an increase of 12% compared to 2022-23. Approximately 89% of cases have related to stray or lost dogs, with most of these cases relating to "contained strays" (dogs found and held by members of the public). Overall, 61% 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 is in contrast to pre-pandemic levels, whilst there continues to be a greater number of stray dogs which are picked up with welfare concerns.

In general terms, WRS receives a relatively low number of dog control complaints. Based on the 56 complaints recorded during the year to date, 30 have related to dog fouling and persistent straying, 13 have related to dangerous dogs, and 11 have related to welfare.



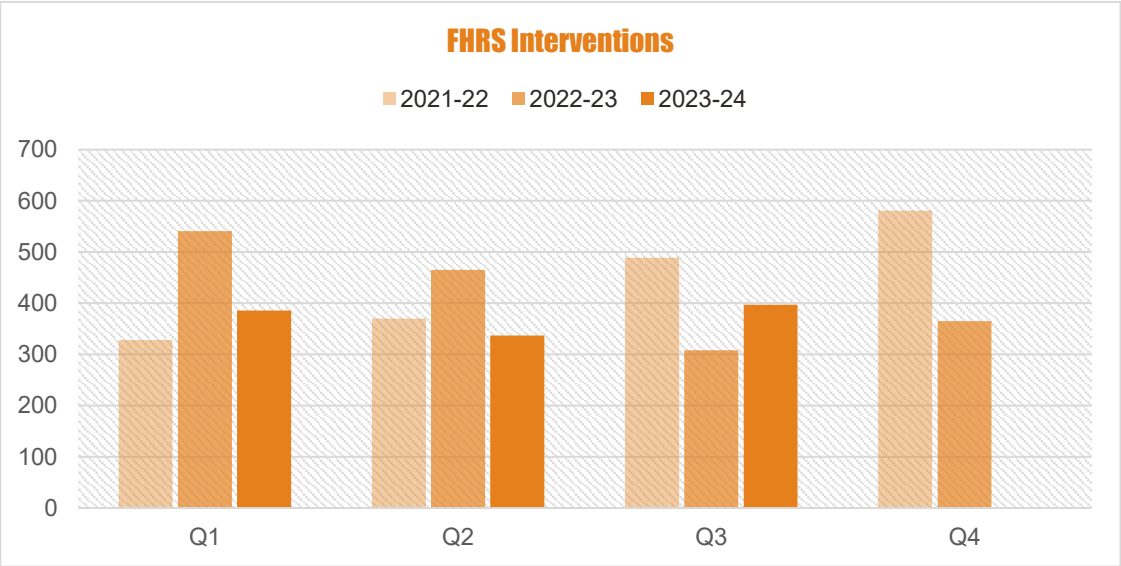
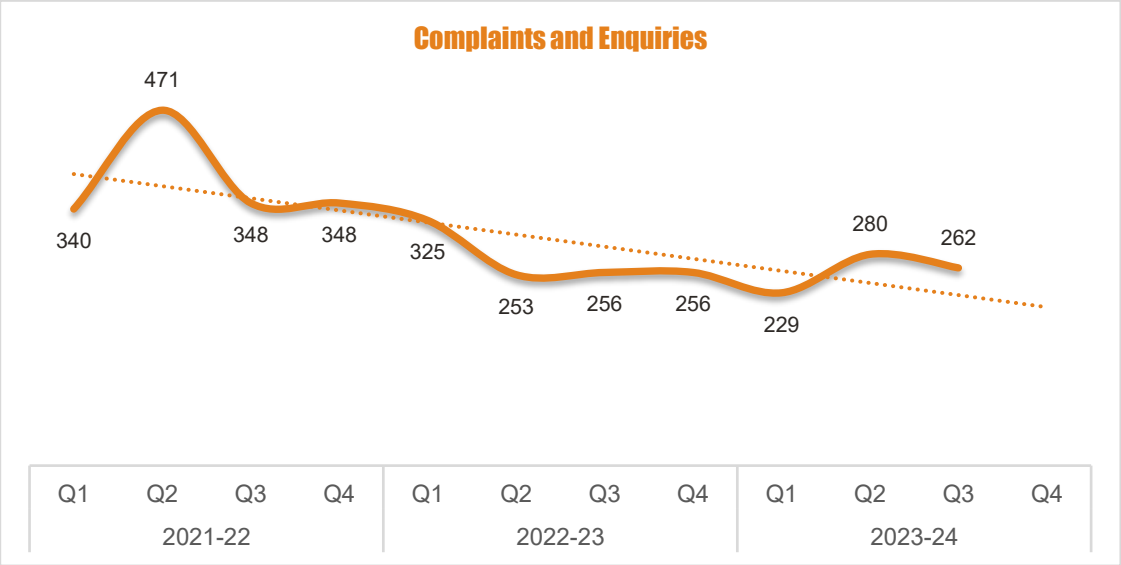
Food Safety

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 the year to date is a reduction of 33% compared to 2021-22, and a reduction of 8% 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 330 complaints recorded during the year to date, 70% have related to issues with products purchased from food businesses (e.g. poor quality food or the presence of foreign objects), whilst 30% have related to poor hygiene standards or practices.

Of the 1,120 interventions conducted at businesses included in the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) during the year to date, 37 were rated as non-compliant (0, 1 or 2). Approximately three quarters of these ratings were issued to takeaways, restaurants, or pubs.

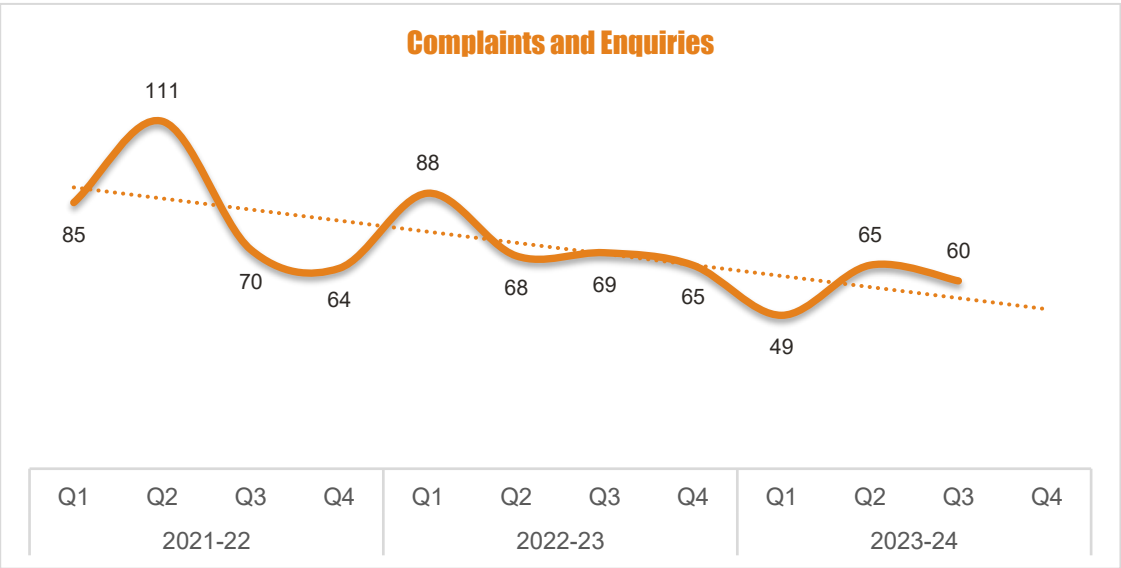
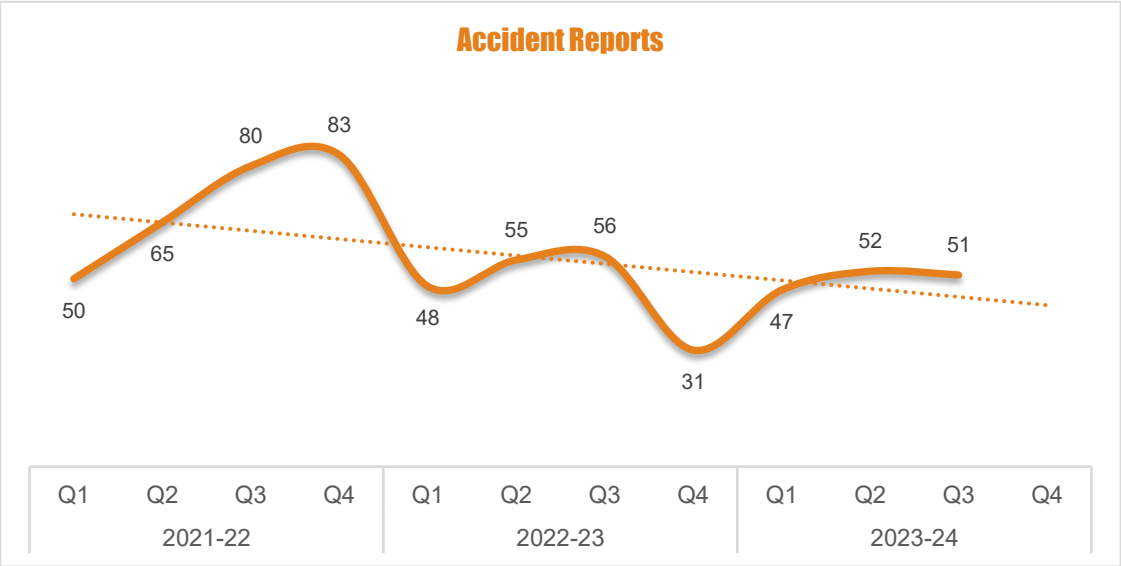


Health and Safety

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

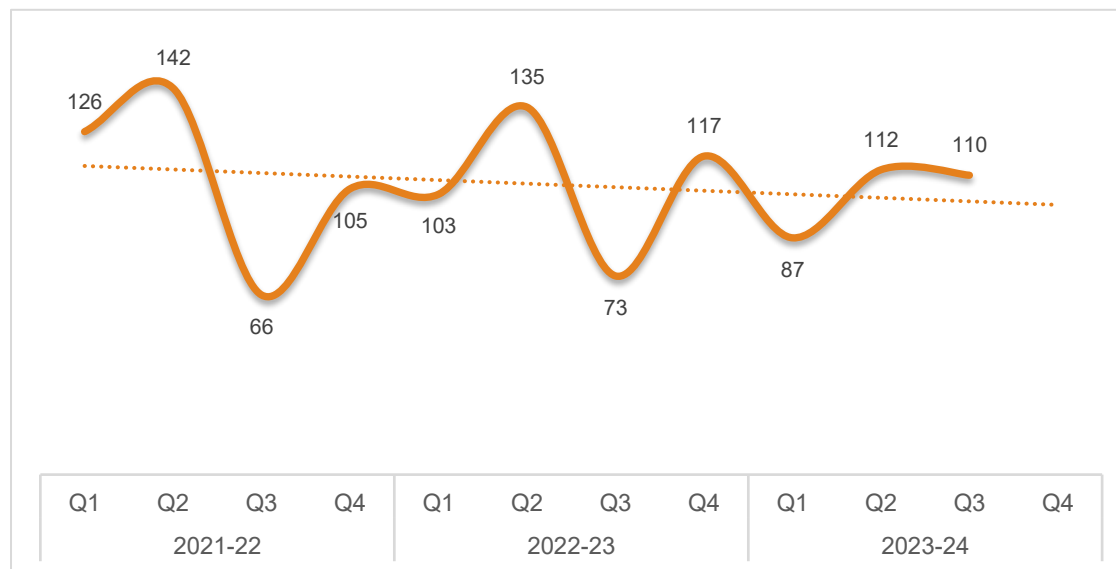
The number of health and safety at work cases recorded by WRS during the year to date is a reduction of 30% compared to 2021-22, and a reduction of 16% compared to 2022-23. Approximately 47% of cases have been reports of accidents, with most of these cases relating to injuries where a worker was incapacitated for more than seven days or injuries to members of the public. Slips, trips, and falls (whether on the same level of from height) continue to be the most prominent cause of accidents occurring in workplaces.



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.

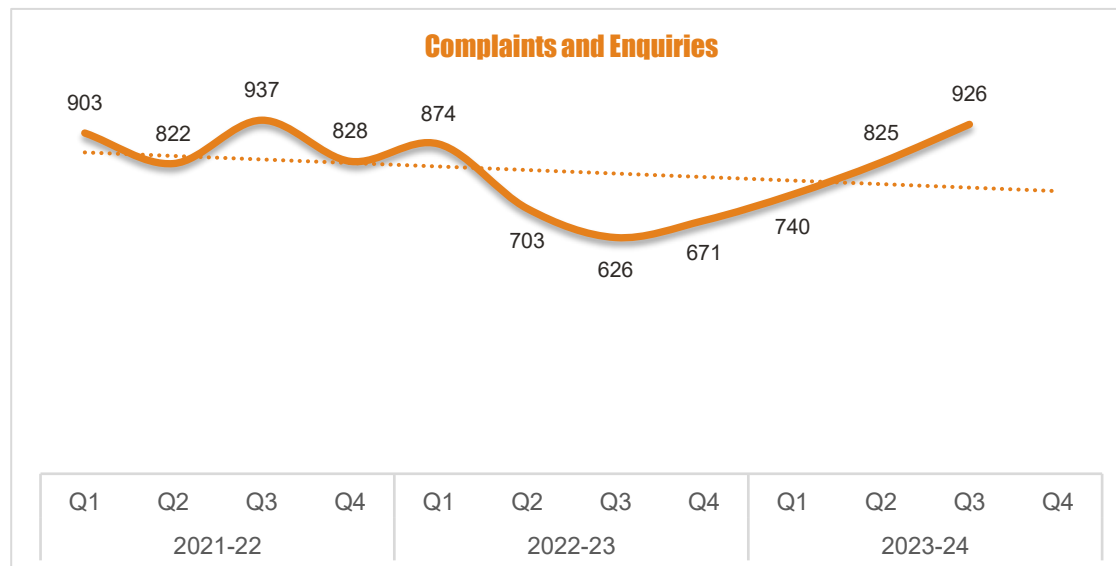
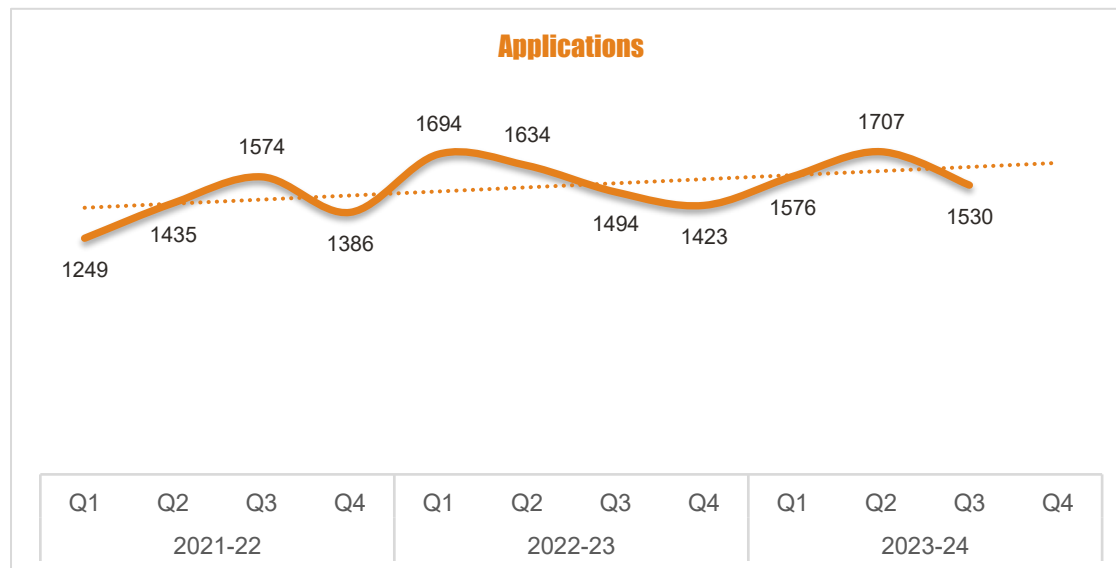
Licensing complaints, enquiries and applications relate to the following;

- 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 the year to date is an increase of 6% compared to 2021-22, but a reduction of 4% compared to 2022-23. Approximately 66% of cases have been applications and registrations; with 28% of these cases relating to private hire licences and 26% relating to temporary events.

In general terms, WRS receives a higher number of enquiries about licensing matters than complaints about licensed activity or unlicensed operators. Based on the 473 complaints recorded during the year to date, 219 have related to taxi licensing, 126 have related to alcohol licensing, and 91 have related to animal licensing (such as unlicensed dog breeding).



Planning

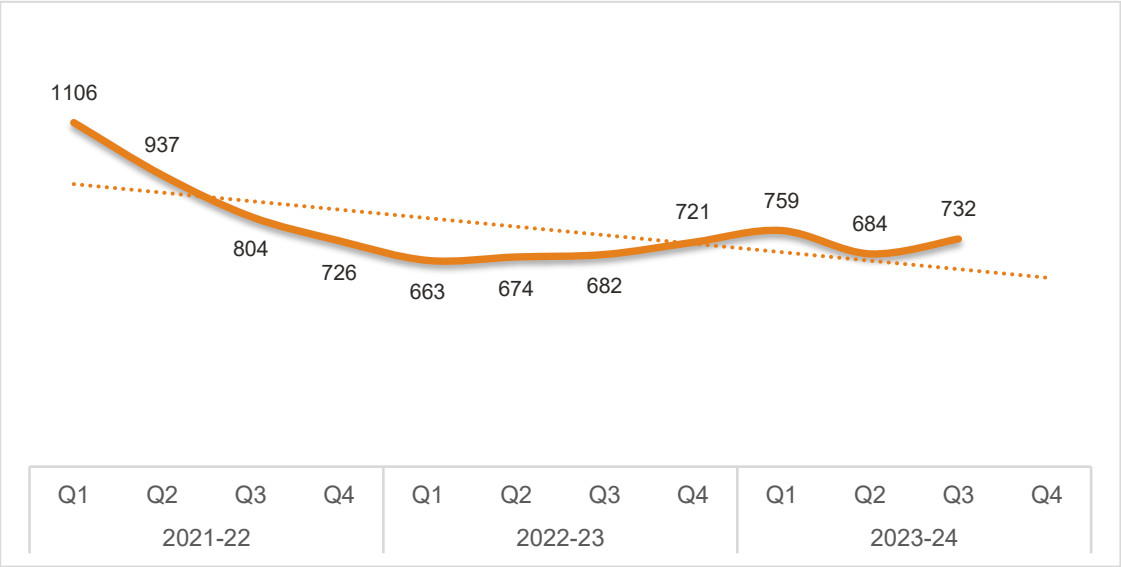
The chart (right) shows the number of planning enquiries completed by WRS over a three year period. The majority of these requests are consultations but can also include requests to discharge conditions.

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 the year to date is a reduction of 24% compared to 2021-22, but an increase of 8% compared to 2022-23. Approximately 93% of enquiries have been consultations, whilst 47% have related to contaminated land. Around 14% of enquiries were completed, on a contractual basis, on behalf of other local authorities.

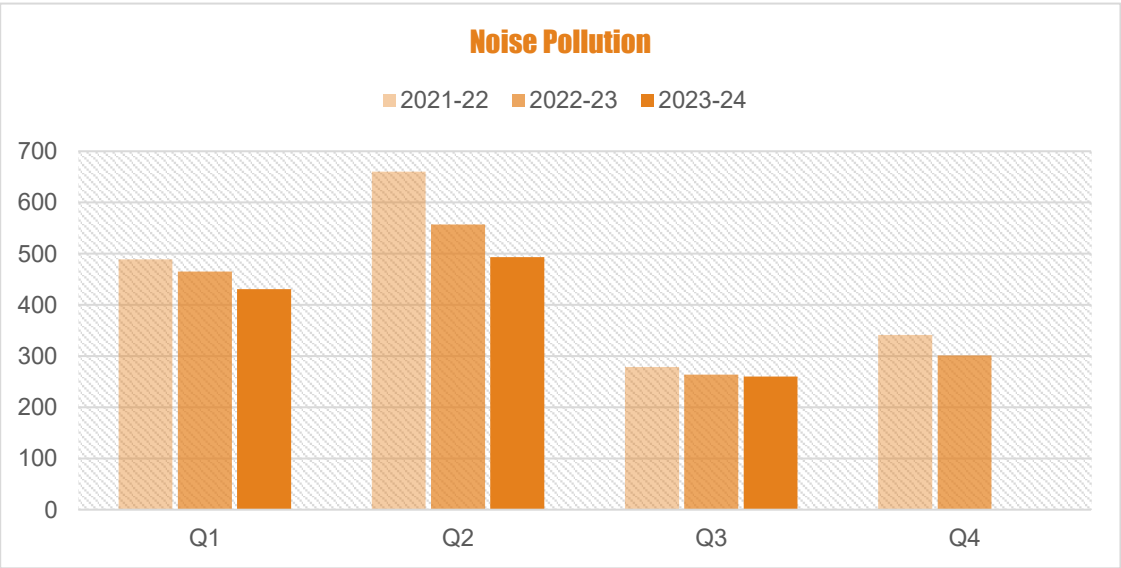
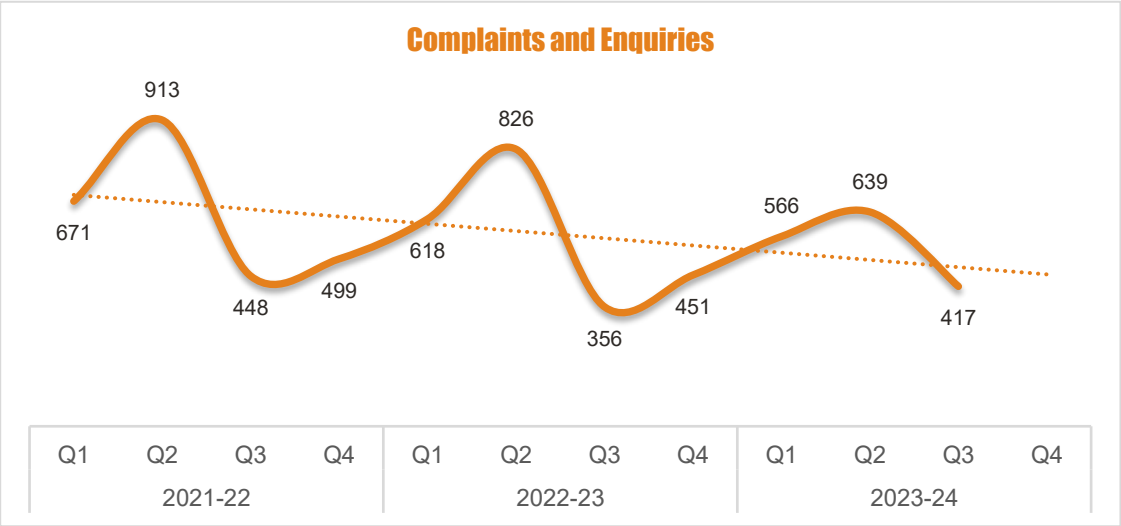


Pollution

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

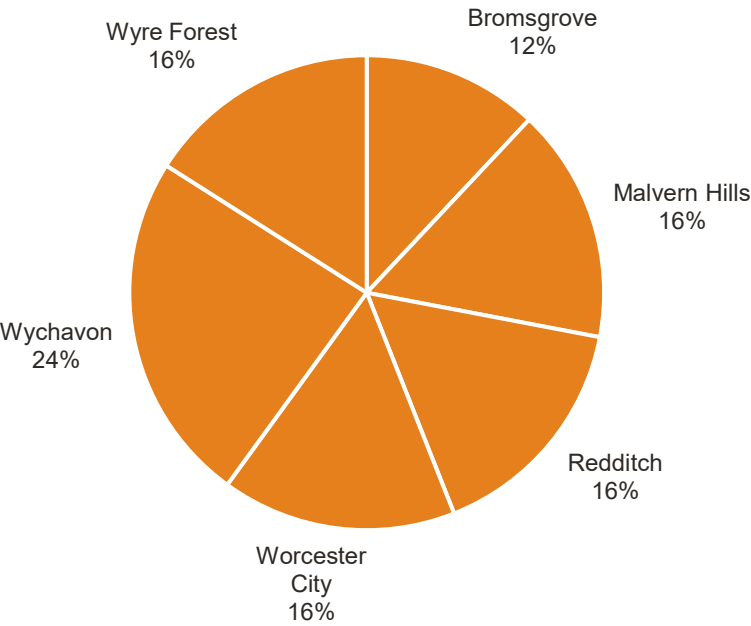
The number of pollution cases recorded by WRS during the year to date is a reduction of 20% compared to 2021-22, and a reduction of 10% compared to 2022-23. It should be noted, however, that case totals are broadly in line with seasonal variations. Approximately 73% of cases have related to noise nuisances, with noise from domestic properties (such as noise from barking or noise from audio-visual equipment) the most prominent sources. A further 12% of cases have related to nuisances caused by smoke, fumes, and gases such as the burning of domestic waste or dust from construction sites.



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.

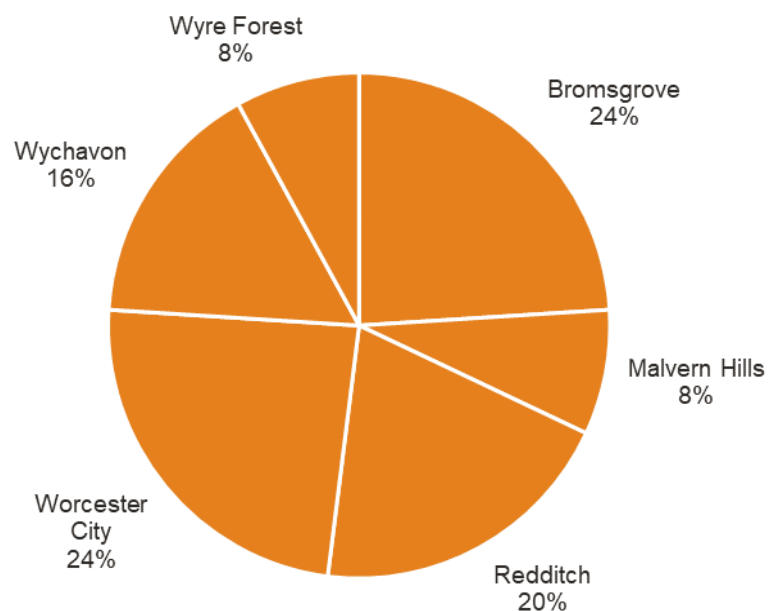


Ward	Total	Population	Rate
Honeybourne And Pebworth	13	2,844	4.57
Ombersley	11	2,459	4.47
Avoncroft	14	3,451	4.06
Cathedral	46	11,760	3.91
Central (Redditch)	21	6,841	3.07
Priory	13	4,384	2.97
Lowes Hill	8	2,854	2.80
Droitwich Central	7	2,621	2.67
Warndon	15	5,661	2.65
Saint John	22	8,736	2.52
Wells	8	3,256	2.46
Norton	9	3,876	2.32
Droitwich West	12	5,217	2.30
Arboretum	14	6,130	2.28
Aggborough And Spennells	20	8,774	2.28
Greenlands	21	9,462	2.22
Upton Snodsbury	6	2,705	2.22
Matchborough	13	6,029	2.16
Ripple	4	1,925	2.08
Lickhill	5	2,409	2.08
Hallow	4	1,941	2.06
Broadwaters	19	9,381	2.03
Batchley And Brockhill	18	8,930	2.02
Bengeworth	16	8,144	1.96
Mitton	19	10,110	1.88

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
Ombersley	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

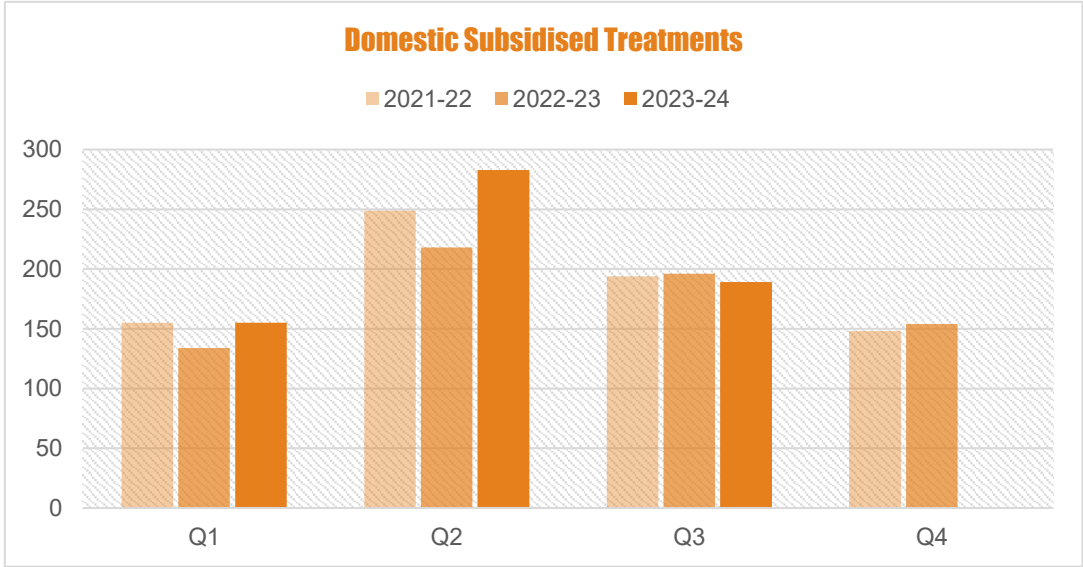
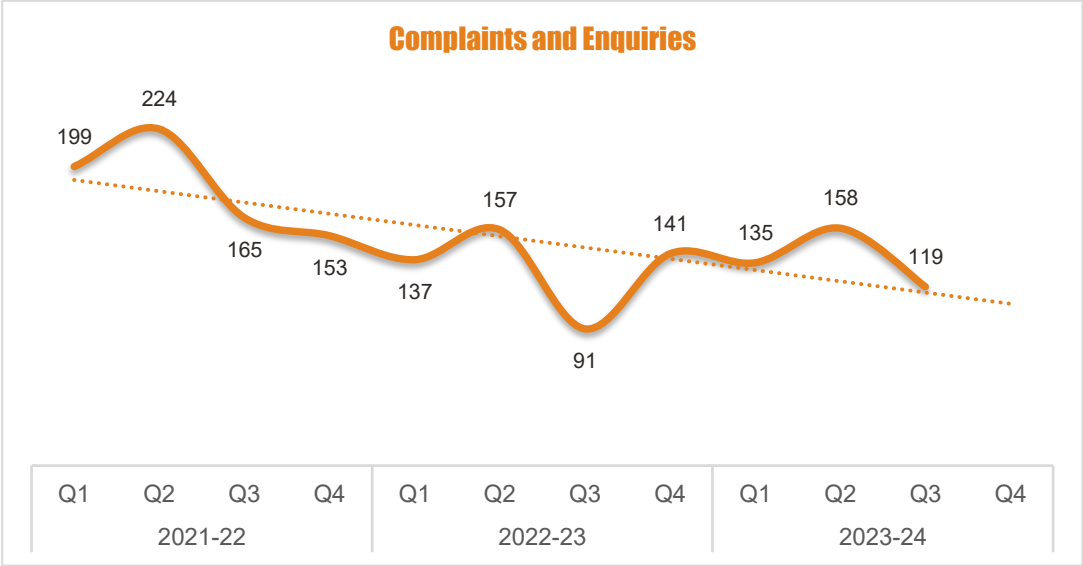
Public Health

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 cateogry 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 off public health cases recorded by WRS during the year to date is a reduction of 30% compared to 2021-22, but an increase of 7% compared to 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 24% of cases have been complaints relating to accumulations at domestic properties which can also include pest control issues.

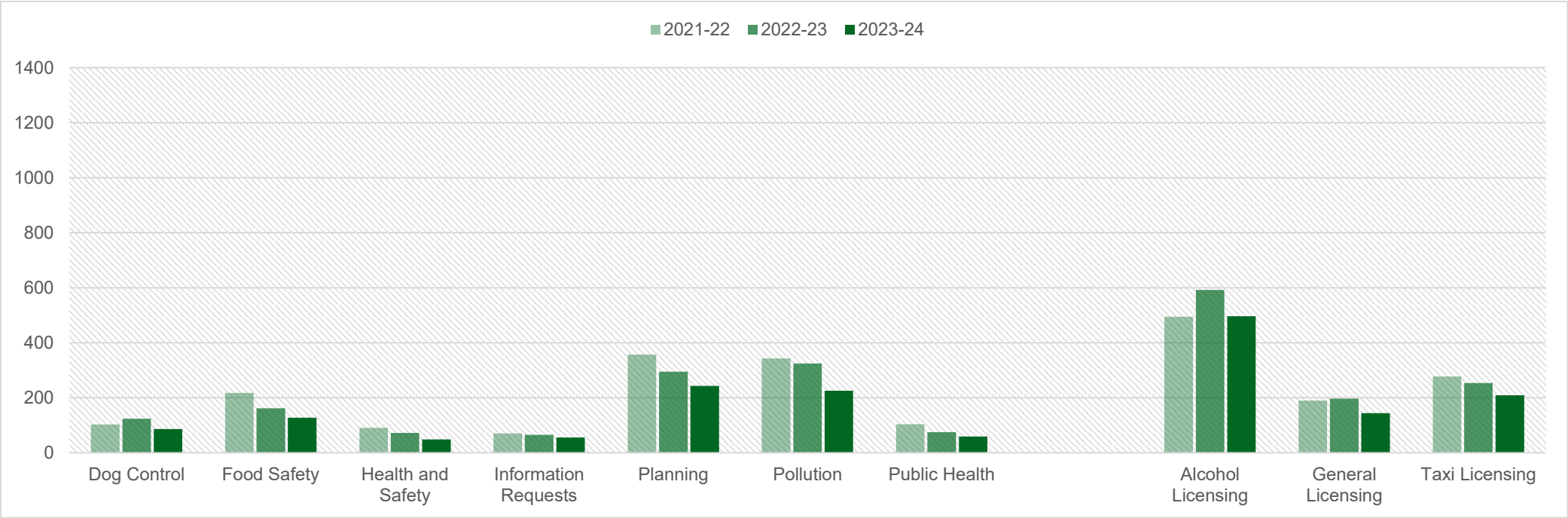
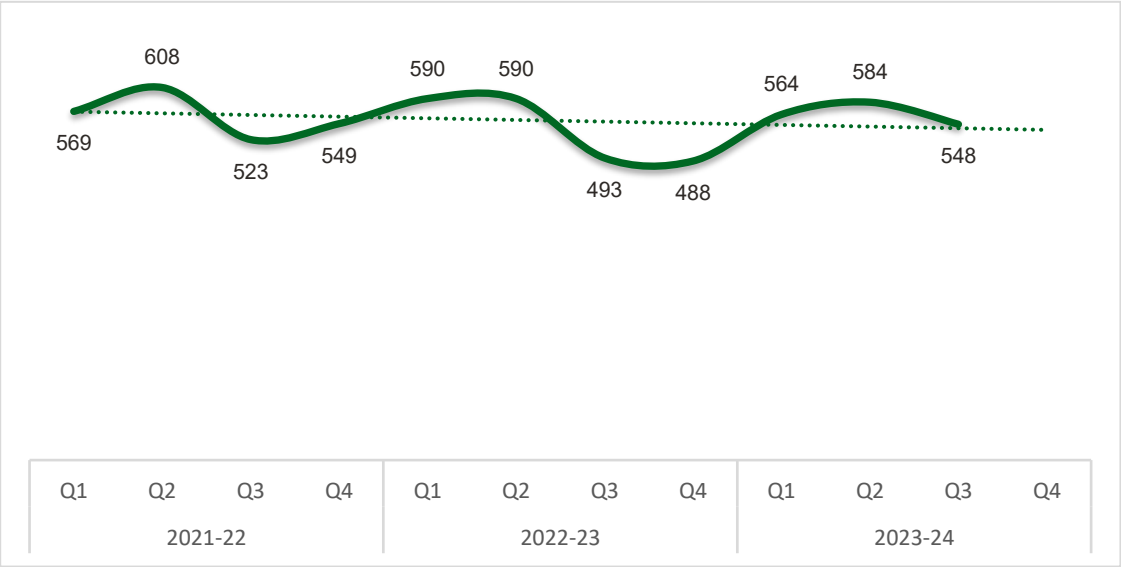
Of the 627 domestic treatments undertaken during the year to date, approximately 46% have been due to issues with rats, 26% have been due to issues with wasps, and 8% have been due to issues with bed bugs. Approxiamtely 64% of treatments have taken place at properties in the Redditch or Wychavon districts.



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.

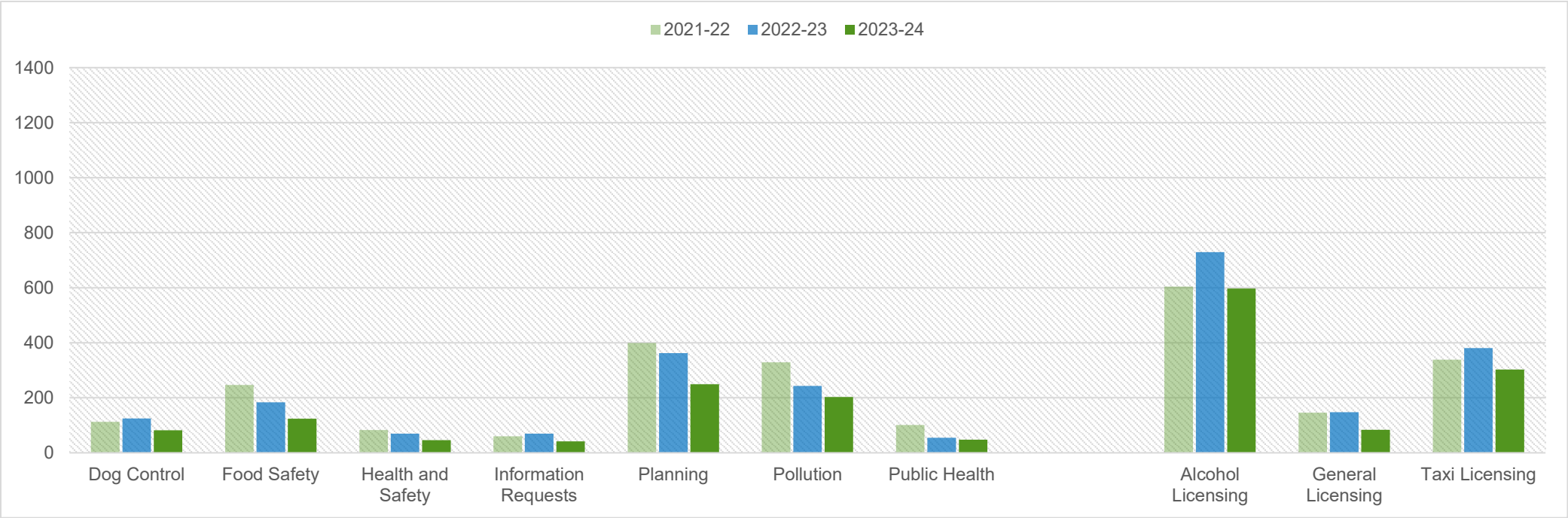
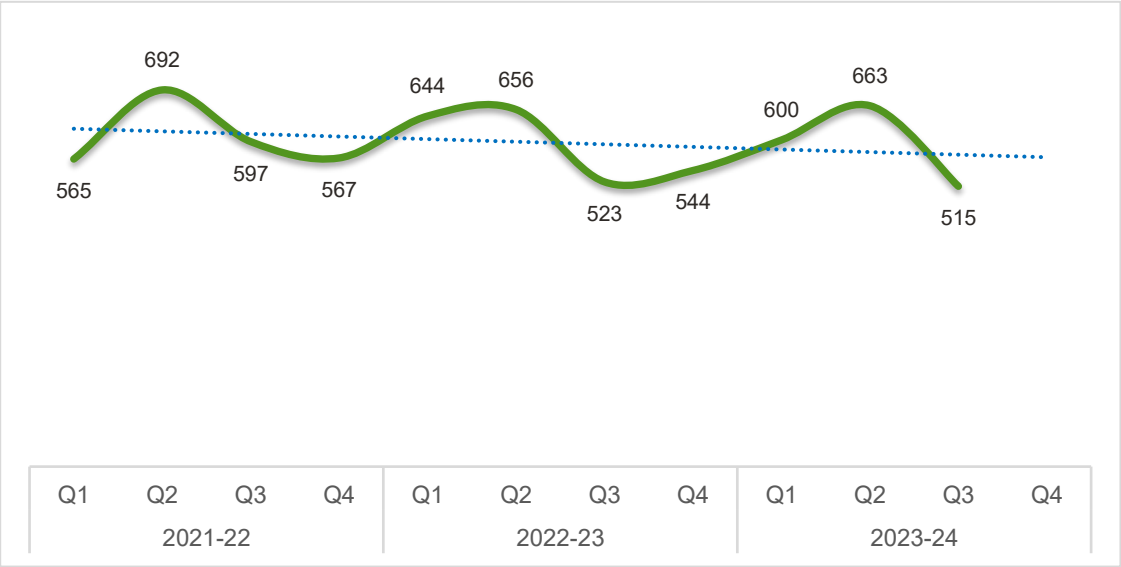
Note: The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS. The figures for the current year are cumulative and will continue to increase until the end of year report is published.



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.

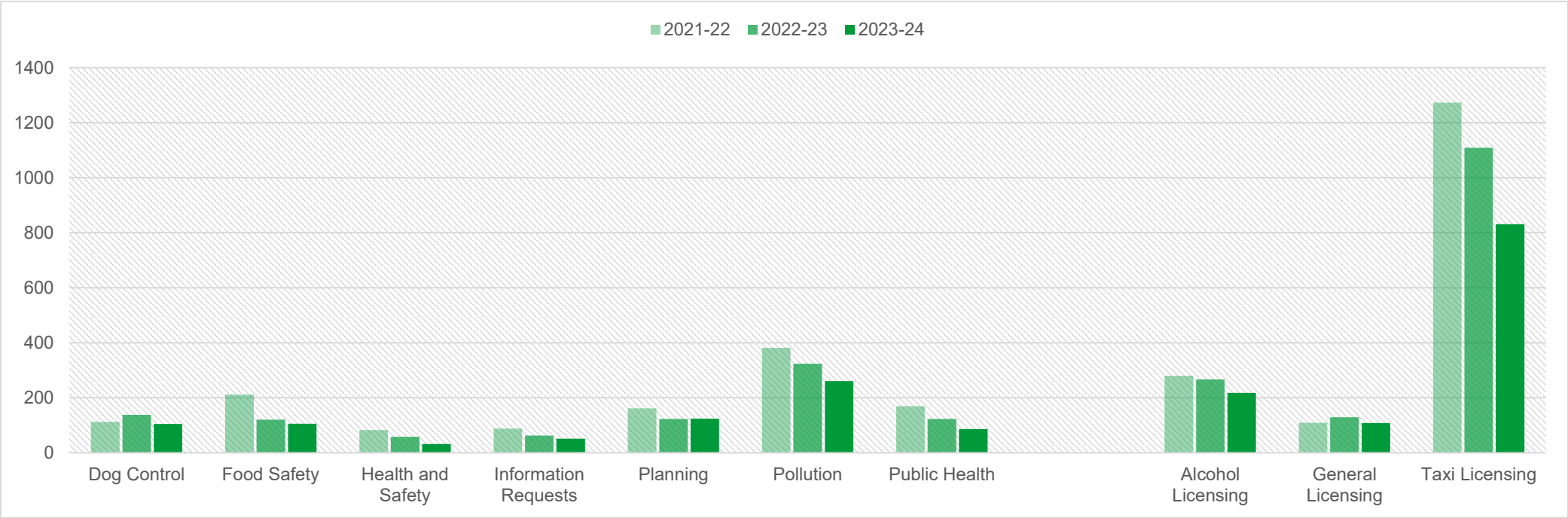
Note: The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS. The figures for the current year are cumulative and will continue to increase until the end of year report is published.



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.

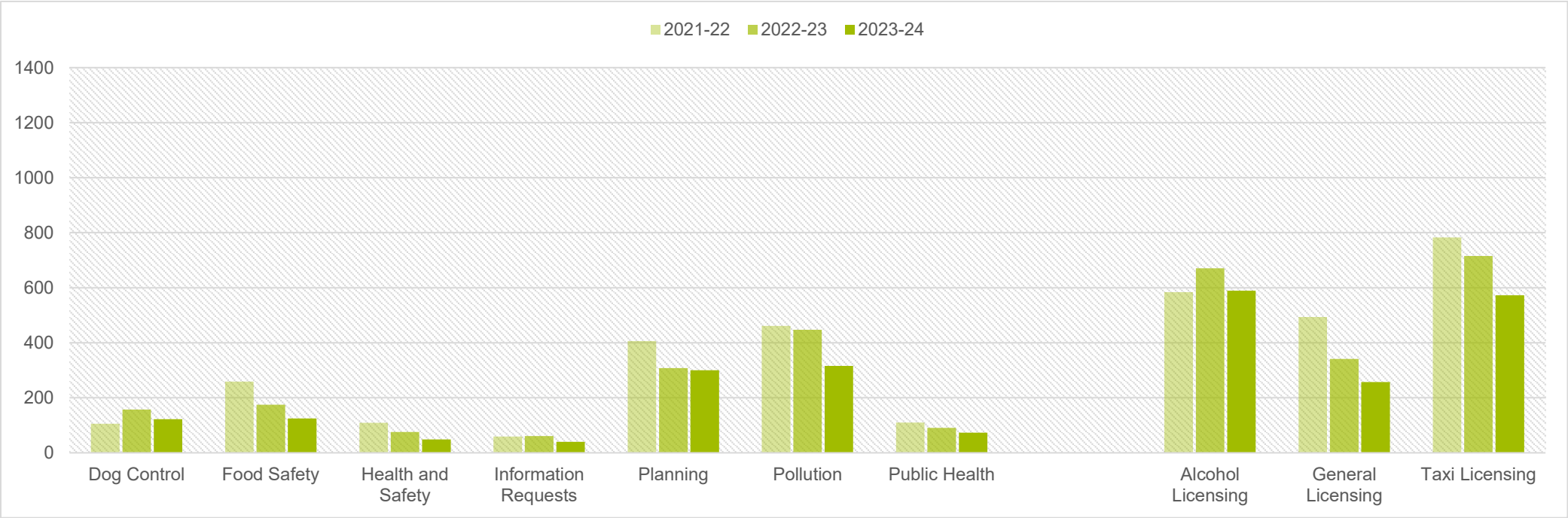
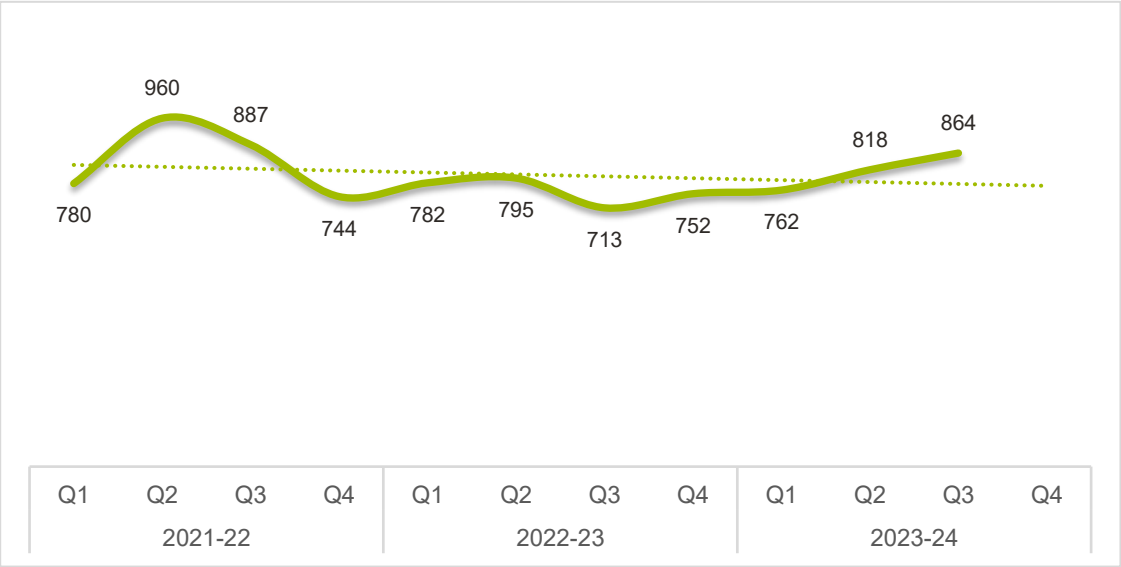
Note: The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS. The figures for the current year are cumulative and will continue to increase until the end of year report is published.



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.

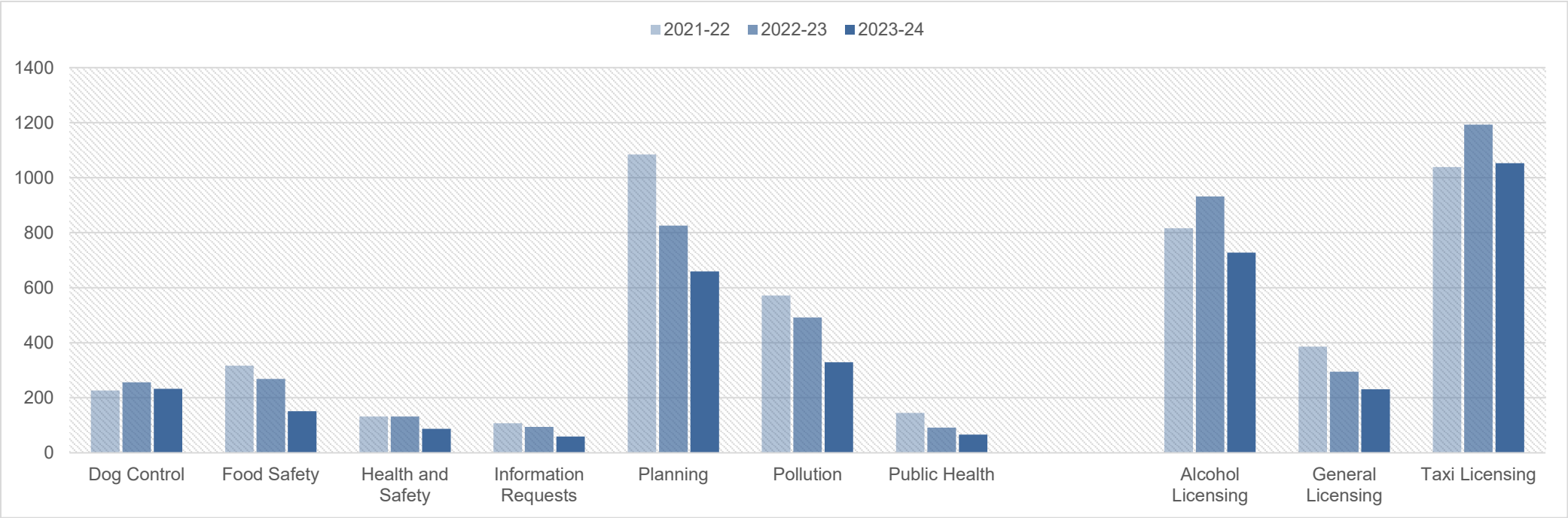
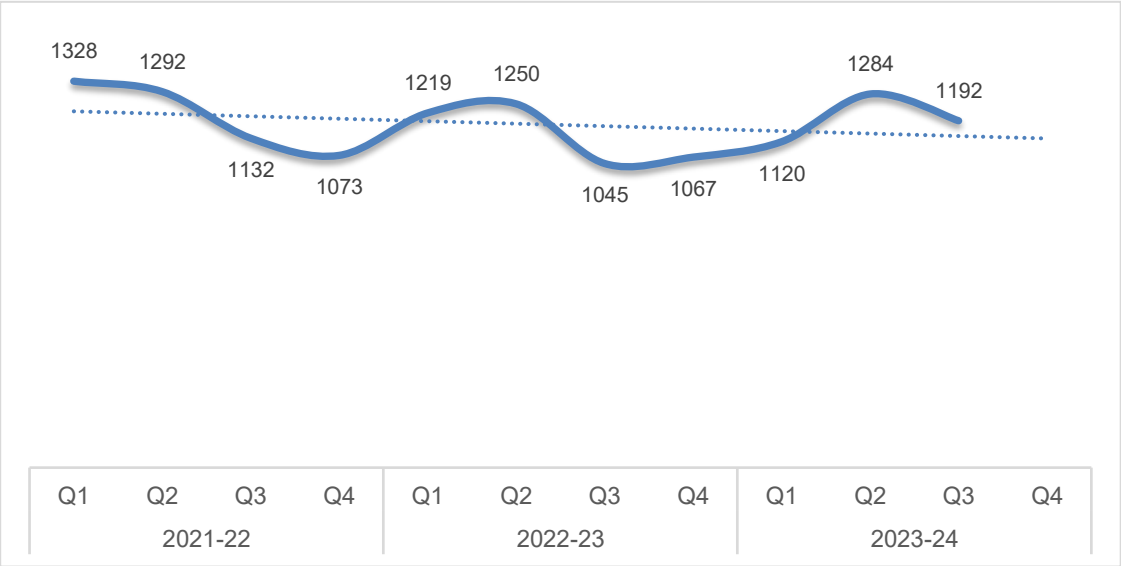
Note: The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS. The figures for the current year are cumulative and will continue to increase until the end of year report is published.



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.

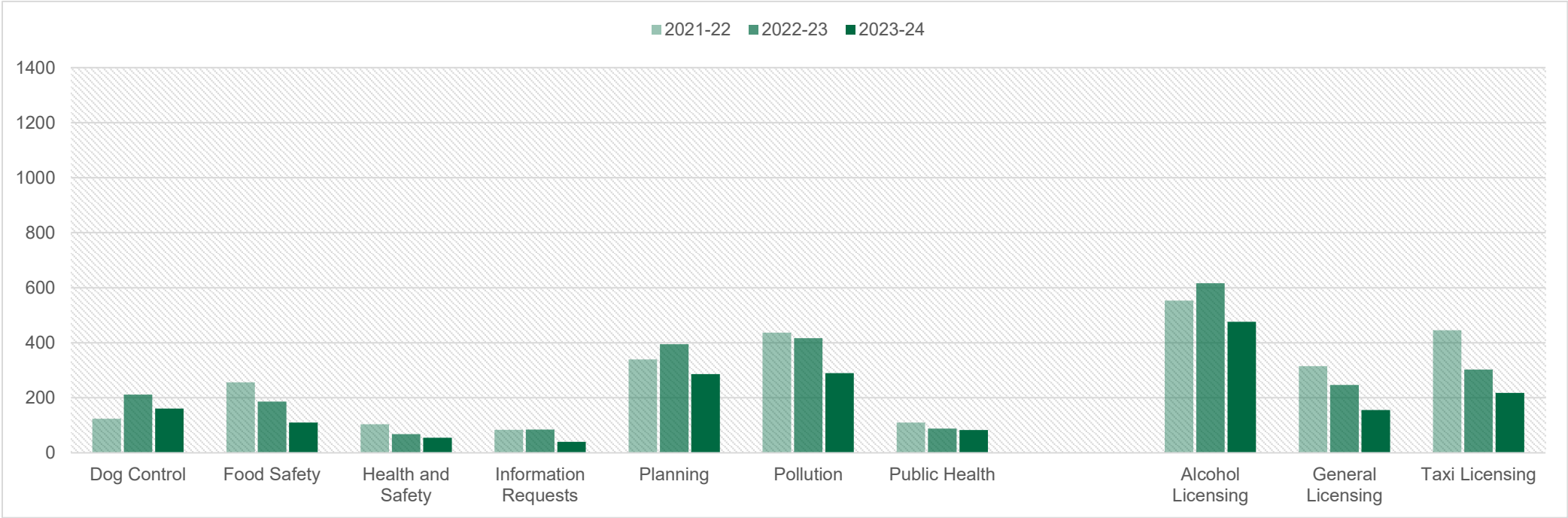
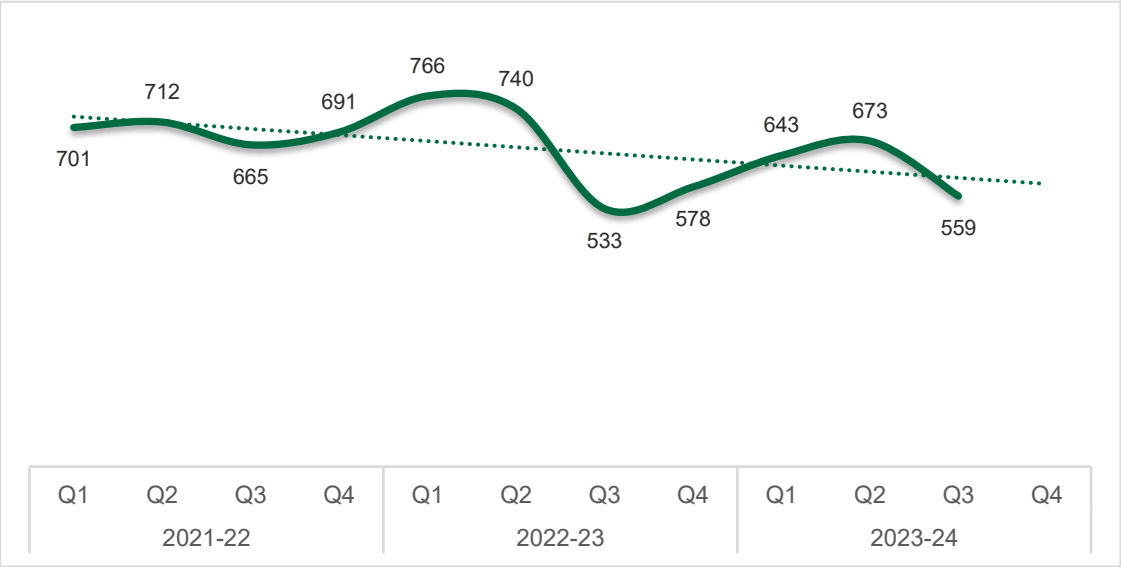
Note: The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS. The figures for the current year are cumulative and will continue to increase until the end of year report is published.



Wyre Forest

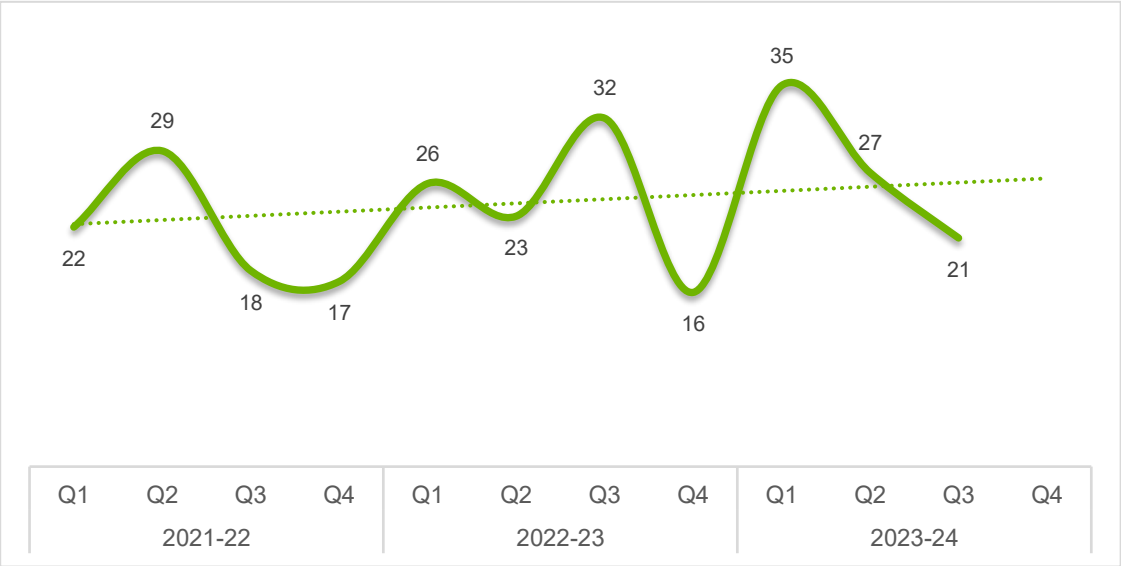
The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Wyre Forest district.

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



Cheltenham

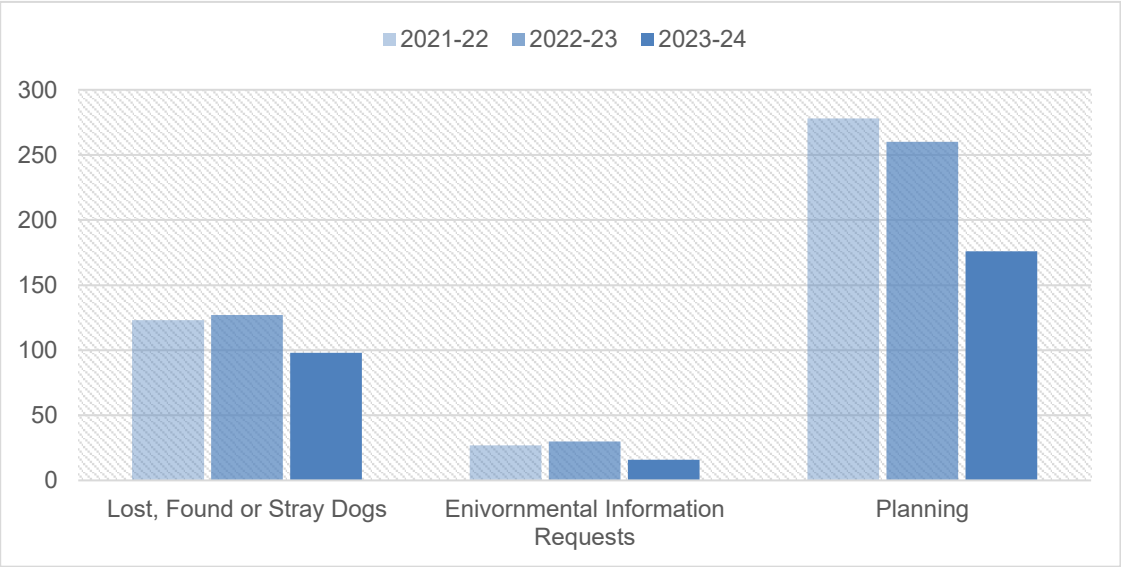
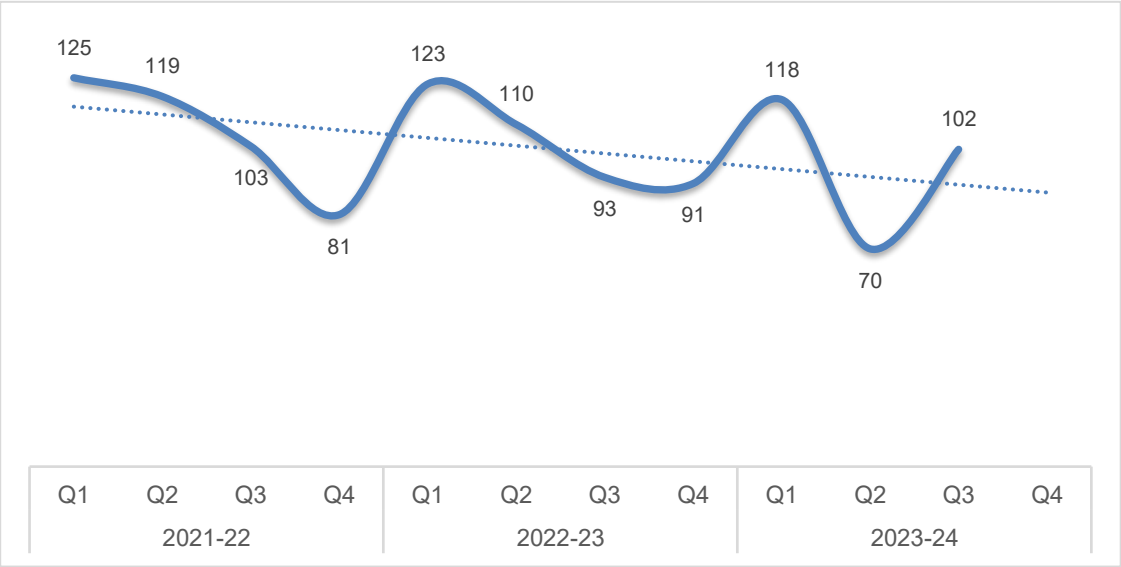
The dog control work undertaken for Cheltenham Borough Council is part of a contract with two other Gloucestershire authorities to deliver the collection, kennelling, returning of dogs to owners and rehoming of stray dog functions. The contract was recently renewed and has been highly successful in reducing 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.



Gloucester City

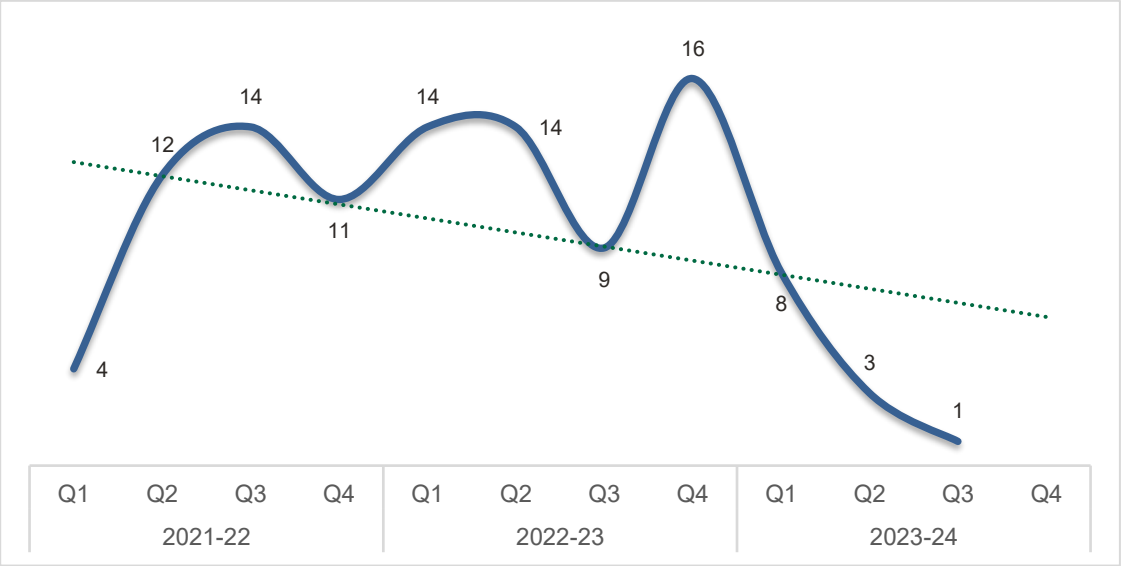
The dog control work undertaken for Gloucester City Council is part of a contract with two other Gloucestershire authorities to deliver the collection, kennelling, returning of dogs to owners and rehoming of stray dog functions. The contract was recently renewed and has been highly successful in reducing 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. 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.

