

Worcestershire
Regulatory Services

Supporting and protecting you

ANNUAL REPORT

2023/24

Making Worcestershire a healthy, safe and a fair place to live where legitimate businesses can thrive

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INTRODUCTION

This Annual Report has been produced for the Joint Board in accordance with clause 11.1 of Part 1 of the Worcestershire Shared Services Partnership Agreement. The report covers the progress and performance of Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) for the period 1st of April 2023 up to the 31st of March 2024 and reports operational activity by the relevant service elements for the financial year. The report summarises key performance data for WRS and provides a summary of the financial position. The report also meets the requirement of the Regulators Code, which requires local authorities to publish a summary of their regulatory activities on an annual basis.

It was clear during 2023/4 that we had moved beyond the pandemic period into what might loosely be described as “normality.” Demand remained high, although an indifferent Summer meant that nuisance levels were slightly lower than previous years. What did not fall was the level of public expectation around how local authority activity could influence the local environment. The success of gaining grant funding for improved monitoring of air quality was converted into the reality of a small network of equipment that will soon be reporting data that the public can see on levels of pollutants in the vicinity of the monitors. We hope this will help to influence people’s behaviour and help them to either protect their own health by not going to those locations or change their transport modes to reduce levels of pollutant. Only time will tell as to whether this succeeds. We also had the intervention of the Food Standards Agency with the concern that partners needed to change the way they addressed lower risk businesses and return to a more traditional approach. Although members openly stated that they were happy with the approach being taken, they felt some move back towards the Agency’s preferred approach was politic and provided additional funding from 2024/5 onwards for further capacity.

This has not impacted our key strategic priorities, which will remain the same and, at a tactical level we will continue to shape our work around the key cross cutting issues identified in the strategic assessment. Following the service plan, these are:

- Supporting a safe and vibrant night-time economy
- Promoting the responsible sale, breeding, and ownership of dogs
- Promoting safe and clean communities

As we embrace the “new normality”, we will continue to support legitimate businesses and residents, particularly the vulnerable, where we are able and at the same time, we will tackle those who break the law, ignore best practice, or adversely impact the environment. Central to this approach remains the availability of accurate data and intelligence sharing. Our intelligence and performance unit coordinates, and analyses intelligence obtained by WRS officers and external agencies, helping managers to target WRS resources more effectively and to forge links with other enforcement agencies and partners to share intelligence and target enforcement action. This is becoming more and more embedded at the heart of what we do.

Simon Wilkes
Head of Regulatory Services

Peter Carpenter
Lead Financial Officer

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS FOR WRS IN 2023/4:

These are covered in the sections below:

PERFORMANCE

Our ability to report performance remains underpinned by the IDOX UNiform management information system, providing Joint Board members with a clear picture of the work being undertaken by WRS. Our key performance measures continue to focus on customer satisfaction and the positive compliance of businesses. Previous year's results appear in brackets in the relevant box providing a comparative view of performance over time. Members are reminded that the recent past is coloured by the pandemic so figures from 2020/21 to at least 2022/3 are likely to be difficult to compare with earlier years. This has probably been our first year free of pandemic influence, so going forward we hope that these and future figures may be easier to relate.

	Measure	Figure	Commentary
1	% of service requests where resolution is achieved to non-business customers satisfaction	60.4% , (59.2, 61.6, 74, 69.5, 63.0, 75.4, 78.9, 78.2, 77.4)	Based on an average score for 6 questions relating to the interaction of the service with non-business customers. 65.8% found their contact with WRS helpful, up from 63.5% last year but below the previous year's 69.5%. 71.7% found the information and advice provided easy to use, slightly below the 72% from last year and below the previous year's 77.4%. As with last year, 57.7% felt that the length of time to address their problem was satisfactory, up from 54.5% the previous year, and 66.9% 65.1% (1.8 and 4.5% points better than last 2-years respectively,) felt that the speed of initial response from WRS was satisfactory. Last Summer was busy for officers but quieter for nuisance work than many summers due to the poor weather. However, only in 43.8% of cases were officers able to resolve the issues of those who responded to the survey, which will always lead to worse figures. Managers will continue to look at how to improve performance in a number of these areas and continue to try to manage public expectations around what is achievable with nuisance issues as many of these will never be resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant. Response rates also remain low with only 161 responses

			received back this year, which is an improvement on last year's 138. Literally hundreds of requests for responses, a mix of digital and paper questionnaires were sent out, but it is very difficult to get replies.
2	% of service requests where resolution is achieved to business customers satisfaction	94.6% , (98.1, 98.2 98.4, 97.4, 97.2, 97.7, 97.1 97.9, 97)	Based on an average score for 9 questions relating to the interaction of the service with business customers. This year even fewer than previous numbers (271 compared to 352 the previous year,) of businesses replied to our questionnaires. Of those who responded, 95% (98.3%/ 97.7% last 2-years,) felt that their business had been treated fairly and 96% (98.6/ 98.5% last 2-years,) of customers felt staff were polite in their dealings with them and informative. Some 94.1% (98.3/ 98.7% last 2-years,) of customers found the information and advice we provided easy to understand and 93.8% (97.9/ 98.1% last 2-years,) found their interaction with us helpful. 91.2.% (96/ 96.7% last 2-years,) were happy with the speed of our responses and, of those who made enquiries rather than being visited, 92.5% (96.3/ 97.3% last 2-years,) were satisfied with the response. As you can imagine, as a regulator we cannot always tell businesses what they want to hear but the overall fall here is a little puzzling as there has been no change to practice and approach, or the information provided. Managers have been asked to monitor this over the coming 12-month period to see if this is a blip, given almost 95% remains good.
3	% Food businesses broadly compliant at first assessment/ inspection	Bromsgrove 99.4% (99.3, 99.3, 98.4, 97.1, 97.2, 98.7,) Malvern Hills 98.2% (97.8, 98.4, 98.6, 98.1, 97.2, 97.0,) Redditch 98.2% (97.1, 97.5, 97.6, 95.6, 96.0, 96.7,) Worcester City 99.2% (99.0, 98.4, 98.4, 97.5, 98.0, 98.0,) Wychavon 98.2% (97.6, 98.2, 99.2, 98.0, 97.4, 97.8,)	The figures demonstrate the high levels of compliance generally of our food businesses. They are mainly well-run and responsive to any issues in relation to hygiene and protecting the health of customers. The additional resource allocated for next year is focused on lower risk businesses so it will be interesting to see if wider interaction with these premises has any significant impact on these figures in 2024/5.

		Wyre Forest 97.8% (98.5, 98.6, 98.2, 98.1, 97.7, 97.2,) Worcestershire 98.5% (98.3, 98.5, 98.5, 97.5, 97.3, 97.6,)	
4	% of food businesses scoring 0,1 or 2 at 1 st April each year	Bromsgrove 0.6% (0.7, 0.7, 1.4, 2.9, 3.6, 1.3, 0.9,) Malvern Hills 1.8% (2.2, 1.6, 1.6, 1.9, 2.8, 3.0, 2.3, 3,) Redditch 1.8% (2.9, 2.5, 2.4, 4.4, 5.1, 3.3, 2.4,) Worcester City 0.8% (1.0, 1.6, 1.6, 2.5, 2.2, 2.0, 1.4,) Wychavon 1.2% (2.4, 1.8, 0.8, 2.0, 3.0, 2.2, 2, 0.8,) Wyre Forest 2.2% (1.5, 1.4, 1.8, 1.9, 2.4, 2.8, 1.9,) Worcestershire 1.5% (1.7, 1.5, 1.5, 2.7, 2.7, 2.4, 2.4,)	Food premises scoring 2 or below on the Food Hygiene Rating System are deemed to be at risk of not producing safe food and are subject to further intervention until such time as they meet requirements or face formal action. There are only small numbers of these in each district.
5	% of drivers licence renewal applications issued within 5 working days of receipt of a complete application	96.8% (97.5, 97.6, 96.9, 75.2, 91.4, 87.7)	This measure was introduced in 2017/18 and looks at how quickly driver licenses are renewed. This is one of the licensing processes where generally no additional paperwork is required before someone is re-licensed so generally this is one where the WRS team is in most control over timescales. This measure is similar to that achieved in previous years.
6	% of vehicles found to be defective whilst in service	70 vehicles, 4.23% Of 1655 vehicles on the road county-wide (5.4, 4%, 0.39% , 3.6%, 2.8%, 2.2%, 2.4%) NB: Figure in bold is from 2020/21 when council garages and others used for testing vehicles were closed for much of the year and no	This figure is lower than last year's 84 but still higher than 59 the previous year. Focusing on the percentage is probably better as total number of vehicles can vary slightly year to year. Rates in the last 3 years do appear to be slightly higher than in previous years, and is probably a reflection of the wider impacts of the pandemic and now the cost-of-living crisis. The overall result is probably a useful reminder to members that taxi vehicles travel a great deal further each year than domestic vehicles and therefore require significantly more upkeep to keep them in a good and safe condition. By definition this will create

		proactive enforcement monitoring took place.	financial pressures within the trade but the safety of the travelling public must remain paramount for the local licensing authority.
7	% of service requests where customer indicates they feel better equipped to deal with issues themselves in future	56.6% (57.0, 58.5, 58.8, 68.2, 58.1, 59, 72.5, 73.8, 76.8, 74.2)	This focuses on non-business customers. It is a specific question asked to members of the public in the questionnaire to test if the information and support provided to them by WRS is likely to help them deal with their own problems in the future. The measure has been lowered for a number of years, reflecting the lower performance overall on non-business customer satisfaction.
8	Review of register of complaints and compliments	26 complaints (28, 25, 42, 44, 27, 25, 31, 17, 24, 47, 70) 121 compliments (116, 134, 161, 163, 128, 138, 103, 51, 57, 36, 24)	This is our longest running performance indicator in this format, hence the long list of previous year's figures. This year's figures are like previous years. Complaints related to issues with responses to nuisance problems and some in relation to turnaround of licenses, with one related to a change in policy.
9	Staff sickness absence at public sector average or better	3.07 days per FTE (2.93, 5.2, 1.9, 4.4, 4.12, 12.45, 5.95, 2.3, 3.9, 7.7, 9.5)	Another fairly good year for sickness in the team, slightly above last year but still well below the previous year's 5.2 and below the average for the 5 years including last (3.71 days/FTE.) Winter this year resulted in several viruses doing the rounds, showing that normal behaviours are returning with more face-to-face contact. Also, one or two staff had longer term issues.
10	% of staff who are satisfied with working for WRS	94% 92, 97.5%, 93.5%, 98%, 88%, (NB: Annual figures for 2017/18 and before, 80%, 85%, 77%, 82%)	52 responses were received from the slightly more than 80 staff we have currently. As ever, some did not respond to all the questions. This score for this measure is based on those who scored 5/10 or better for the question in the staff survey which asked, are you satisfied with working with WRS (score is from 0 to 10.) Some 85.6% (44/52,) scored this question at 8/10 or higher. Due to current time constraints, we have yet to do more detailed analysis of broader staff comments, but it is good to know that many are happy working for the service.
11	% of licensed businesses subject to allegations of not upholding the 4 licensing objectives	Bromsgrove 9.9% (7.2, 5.9, 5.4, 6.8, 8.7, 6.73, 3.8,)	Linked to the Crime & Disorder agenda and introduced following discussions with elected members, this measure

		<p>Malvern Hills 5.8% (4.1, 5.1, 3.5, 5.7, 4.8, 4.94, 3.6,) Redditch 8.7% (8.1, 9.5, 8.3, 8.5, 7.1 8.65, 2.7,) Worcester City 13.8% (8.5, 10.0, 5.7, 8.8, 8.1, 8.19, 5.8,)</p> <p>Wychavon 6.2% (8.2, 6.3, 3.7, 4.2, 4.0, 4.97, 4.0,) Wyre Forest 9.1% (9.4, 9.1, 5.1, 8.5, 7.0, 8.29, 5.8,) Worcestershire 8.8% (7.6, 7.5, 5.0, 6.8, 6.4, 6.78, 4.4,)</p>	<p>is now in its ninth year, although only eight years results appear in the table. This year all figures are above average with both the overall figure and 3 of the six districts having the highest reported figures ever. We previously explained to members that, after pandemic lockdowns where hospitality premises were closed for long periods, the general tolerance of noise and similar activities from this type of premise seemed to have reduced, so as these businesses sought other activities and uses of their outside spaces to increase revenue, this made residents living in the vicinity unhappy. This appeared to be slightly less prevalent last year, but it has clearly changed this year. It should be noted that this only records the level of accusations of breaches, and we can confirm that there has not been an increase either in abatement notices being served or in Licensing Act reviews. It still shows that 90% plus of premises across the County are well run and controlled by their operators, and we know from interactions with Police colleagues that concerns tend to be limited to smaller numbers of premises.</p>
12	Rate of noise complaint per 1000 head of population	<p>Bromsgrove 2.19 (2.26, 2.25, 2.56, 1.96, 2.7, 2.82, 3.0, 2.7, 3.1) Malvern Hills 1.91 (1.93, 2.29, 2.45, 2.07, 2.2, 2.39, 3.0, 2.3, 3.9) Redditch 2.45 (3.09, 3.61, 3.67, 2.97, 3.2, 3.61, 4.1, 3.7, 3.5) Worcester City 2.86 (3.40, 3.47, 3.1, 2.78, 3.2, 3.13, 4.2, 4.0, 2.9) Wychavon 2.04 (2.07, 2.45, 2.08, 2.01, 2.1, 2.46, 2.7, 2.6, 2.5) Wyre Forest 2.29</p>	<p>The rate for all districts this year are low-average to low with Malvern Hills, Redditch and Wyre Forest reporting their lowest figures since the indicator was introduced. We know that last year saw a relatively poor Summer and the weather undoubtedly contributed to this to some extent but, a little like the reduction in business satisfaction, it is difficult to identify specific issues across the board that might account for this.</p> <p>Domestic noise represents more than half of complaints and, as we have illuded to in Activity Data Reports, noise from dogs and from audio devices remain key drivers of this. With commercial premises it tends to be a small number of these that certain residents have concerns about, and things like a change of DPS in a pub and the</p>

		(2.75, 2.65, 2.71, 2.37, 2.6, 3.23, 3.4, 3.0, 3.0) Worcestershire 2.33 (2.57, 2.9, 2.74, 2.35, 2.7, 2.93, 3.4, 3.1, 3.8)	business looking at more diverse ways of bringing in revenue can lead to friction with the local community. 1.350 noise cases were received during 2023/24 (185 fewer than the previous year), with 869 cases (or 64%) relating to noise from domestic properties.
13	Total Income	£502,641, which is 16.6% as a proportion of the 2016/17 revenue budget figure (£3,017,000) and 13.3% of the current net revenue budget of £3,766,000	This figure does not include the income for work derived from partners like the Homes 4 Ukraine work or the pilot work on planning enforcement. This is purely money raised from outside of the partners.
14	Cost of regulatory services per head of population.	Based on overrun cost of £3,767,000 against the County Council population estimate of 613680 for 2023, the service cost is: £6.14 per head	This is the amount spent by the partners following the off-setting of cost with income, then divided by the mid-year estimate WCC provides on the population estimates pages of its website. It is difficult to benchmark this figure with other authorities as WRS functions are not all of those reported in the relevant part of the RO return to DLUHC. Work has been undertaken to look at this.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Strong management of performance is vital for the success of this service, ensuring that partners are reassured by the cost-effective delivery of the service on their behalf. Whilst everyone must accept responsibility for managing performance, the WRS management team is committed to driving performance forward so that a high standard of service delivery can be maintained. As can be seen from the figures above, the main challenge for the service is to improve the perception of non-business customers have of our performance, so this will be an on-going key task for managers in 2024/5 and beyond.

Management team meetings are used to review performance against the service plan and to highlight any issues of concern. Principal Officers (first line managers) attend these wider management meetings to ensure a two-way flow of information between management and staff. Separately, the Head of Service and Team Managers meet weekly to ensure everything is kept under review. Teams have their own detailed plans that sit below the service plan signed off by Joint Board. Progress against this is monitored by Team Managers and Principal Officers.

The Management team also looks to the strategic direction of the service and ensures that the operational and financial resources available to partners are used in the most efficient manner to achieve both their individual strategic aims together with WRS priorities.

Continued refinement of our IT platform ensures our ability to report to Joint Board on our performance measures and that this remains accurate. The Uniform system operates well across all functions, but it is somewhat antiquated. Consideration was given to replacement but in the current financial climate this is co-prohibitive when we have a system in place that does the job, albeit is a little clunky at times. The service also subscribes to the national IDB intelligence database, enabling it to share intelligence with other local authorities in the region and nationally so that common issues and individual entities active across local authority borders can be identified and work to deal with them co-ordinated. DLUHC is looking to encourage the broader use of the system, especially at district council level, and has continued to fund access for district council Housing Standards teams to help them better engage with colleagues in Trading Standards services where enforcement responsibility for estate agency, tenant fees and energy efficiency of buildings sits.

There are a wide range of bodies to which the service must report data (e.g., Food Standards Agency, Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Health and Safety Executive, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Gambling Commission etc.). All statutory reports are submitted to ensure that WRS continues to meet its partner's statutory obligations. It was hoped that the central bodies would accept a single data return for all partners, but it now appears that all Departments except for the Health and Safety Executive continue to require individual returns for each partner. WRS provides these as necessary.

A short summary of activity data is included at Appendix 5 to avoid duplication with the wider and more detailed set of activity data that is provided in the final Activity Data Report for 2023/4, which members will receive at the same meeting where this Annual Report is presented.

Internal Audits

Internal Audit this year engaged with WRS to support the implementation of the automation project that utilises the Victoria Forms product to allow the submission of on-line service requests and license applications that are automatically put into the back-office Uniform database to reduce inputting. It was decided that, although the cost of implementation was relatively modest, it was important to be able to demonstrate oversight of the project by senior managers and the approach taken was acceptable to the audit team.

SERVICE DELIVERY HIGHLIGHTS

There have been many highlights throughout the year that showcase the work of our teams and illustrate the breadth of their responsibilities.

Community Environmental Health Team

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

Statutory Nuisance

Nuisance complaints followed their long-established seasonal pattern through the year. We received over 2080 service requests with some 40 statutory notices being served in all categories. Approximately 72% of nuisance cases related to noise nuisances (up slightly on the previous year,) with noise from domestic properties (such as noise from barking or noise from audio-visual equipment) the most prominent sources. A further 13% of nuisance cases related to those caused by smoke, fumes, and gases such as the burning of domestic waste or dust from construction sites. Public Health complaints, often linked to nuisance and dealt with under the same or similar legislative provisions were also investigated. Abatement Notices were served for issues including noise nuisances from amplified music on licensed premises, barking dogs, accumulations, and insufficient drainage arrangements.

While the proportion of noise issues relating to businesses was slightly higher than in previous years, domestic noise still represented more than half of complaints. Noise from dogs and from audio devices remain key drivers of this. With commercial premises residents' concerns generally arise from a change of management and businesses looking at more diverse ways of bringing in extra revenue which can lead to friction with the local community. Overall however, the environment for Worcestershire residents remains good.

Food Safety

2,300 interventions were conducted at businesses included in the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) during the year, with only 57 being rated as non-compliant (rated 0, 1 or 2). This figure includes both site visits and assessments of low-risk premises done by remote monitoring, e.g., questionnaires. Whilst the data below demonstrates that we continue to have high levels of compliance officers report they are finding more premises with major non-compliances, particularly in the independent sector. Approximately three quarters of these ratings were issued to hospitality businesses (such as takeaways, pubs, or restaurants) whilst a further 10% were issued to small retailers. The team received 426 food safety complaints during 2023/24. 71% related to issues with products purchased from food businesses (poor quality food or the presence of foreign objects) while some 29% related to poor hygiene standards or practices.

Members will be aware of the engagement undertaken during Q4 with the Food Standards Agency on inspections at lower risk premises. Following the support of the Board, we are in the process of recruiting five additional officers to carry out this work.

Exports

We continued to provide an export certificate service throughout the year, an essential function which enables Worcestershire businesses to trade overseas. Eight of your officers have been certified by APHA to sign certificates for fish and egg related exports and 85 certificates were issued.

Primary Authority

We continue with our successful Primary Authority Partnerships (PAPs) in the food sector and are very proud to have recently added the food giant Muller to the portfolio of businesses for which we provide assured advice. Existing PAPs include Alimenti, Aspens, My EChef, Servest, Venture Events Catering, Mindful Chef (online healthy meals) and Kelsius (international company offering temperature control equipment). Some of these are multiple site operators, others are SME with less than 10 employees, demonstrating the range of businesses to which WRS can offer support. Our Principal Officer (Food) Chairs a national network of PA authorities.

Health and Safety at Work

The team were faced with some very complex and challenging health and safety accident investigations throughout 2023/4, some of which have involved fatalities including young persons and close liaison with West Mercia Police and The Coroner's Office. More details of these can be shared once they have progressed through the legal process.

WRS officers were also instrumental in the process of ensuring that our local football teams (Bromsgrove Sporting, Kidderminster Harriers and Worcester) and Worcester Racecourse could fulfil their home fixtures by working with the respective safety officers to maintain their General Safety Certificates. This Safety at Sports Grounds work is carried out on a contract basis by WRS on behalf of Worcestershire County Council who have the legal responsibility for issuing safety certificates. Our ongoing work also secures events being held safely at Sixways Stadium.

The team continues to monitor major events, working with organisers to ensure that they are properly managed, meet legal requirements and run smoothly, safely and without causing unnecessary disturbance. These have included numerous music festivals across the county, a Passion Play in Worcester which included checking the risk assessment for a mock crucifixion and events planned for the Three Counties Showground.

Technical Services Team

Environmental Permitting

The technical services team successfully completed our inspection programme for 2023-24 in January and all subsistence instructions were supplied to the partners by the agreed dates of mid-March. DEFRA have also determined that there would be no increase in subsistence fees again for 2024-25.

Officers have continued to pursue businesses in breach of the Environmental Permitting regulations. A business in Malvern Hills District is being pursued through enforcement action following a pollution incident.

Alongside the environmental permitting for petrol stations the petroleum licensing function of the County Council was delivered to maximise efficiency, minimise enforcement costs and deliver improved customer service as well as permitting for Gloucester City Council which included assisting them with a significant application for a permit on a contentious site.

Local Air Quality Management

Officers successfully installed the permanent air quality monitoring station in Wychbold following borderline air quality levels being identified over successive years. This system is providing important information on PM10 pollution and greatly enhance our understanding of air quality impact around the village. Following the team's successful bid to Defra for funding of an enhanced air quality monitoring programme in the county to support behavioural change. Twenty-six monitoring stations have been installed across the county with the ability to monitor nitrogen dioxide, particulate matter and other pollutants accurately in real time. The data collected will be

reported and published in real time and enable behavioural change to be encouraged. The aim is to influence those who are vulnerable to air pollutants to protect themselves when required but also to influence those who may consider whether to contribute to pollutant release (drive a polluting vehicle) on any particular day. A behavioural change specialist has been employed to assist with understanding the barriers to and encourage behaviour change to the benefit of air quality in specific locations identified.

A significant amount of support and resource has been invested in supporting Worcester City and County colleagues in drafting an air quality action plan for the City. This is part of the local reporting requirements where an air quality management area has been declared. We have assessed measures put forward by City and County colleagues in terms of impact on nitrogen dioxide and almost completed a consultation version of the action plan. The initial conversations with Wyre Forest and Bromsgrove colleagues have commenced with a view to repeating the exercise to produce Action Plans for those areas too.

Contaminated Land and Planning support on technical issues

Officers continued to support the development control process has continued throughout the year with this being the largest or second largest draws on demand of all WRS service areas for every month of the entire year. Alongside the reactive work, the team have continued to work with partner colleagues in production of a supplementary planning document on Air Quality for South Worcestershire and provided updates to guidance available to consultants supporting developers when tackling environmental health issues with development. A draft revision of Redditch Borough Council's adopted Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy is nearing completion ahead of consultation and adoption by Executive.

This year we have also provided contaminated land and planning support on technical issues to Bristol City Council, East Staffordshire District Council, Gloucester City, North Warwickshire District Council, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, South Gloucestershire Council and Tewkesbury District Council.

Dog Warden Service

It has been a very difficult year for dog wardens. Until last year we had previously reported an annual fall in stray dog numbers, with it plateauing in 2021 and a slight increase of over one hundred stray dogs reported during 2022. However, in 2023 with the announcement of a proposed and subsequently introduced ban on XL Bully type dogs, things became very difficult. We had an increase in the number of stray dogs anyway as we continued to deal with owners giving up unsocialised dogs and not claiming them when seized. With the announcement in September the number of large bull breeds turning up as strays significantly increased with owners not claiming them and not being able to claim them. As a consequence of the legislation the number of dogs euthanised increased as it became an offence to pass on or rehome an XL Bully. In 2022 we had 854 stray dogs reported with 0.7% being put to sleep due to illness, temperament or being a banned breed, 67% returned to owners and 32% rehomed. This year, the percentage of dogs put to sleep has increased to 3% (34 dogs), with an increased number of dogs rehomed at 35% (373 dogs) and a corresponding drop in the numbers of dogs claimed by their owners at 61% (634 dogs). The increased number of dogs that have been put to sleep have taken a toll on our staff and additional support measures were put in place to safeguard their wellbeing. The situation has been exacerbated by a change in police policy nationally which has reduced the support available to assist with identifying banned breeds and seizing them for action under the Dangerous Dogs Act.

The increase in numbers of dogs requiring rehoming has had a knock-on impact in costs (dogs being boarded for the full 7 days before rehoming) and capacity of kennels. Fortunately, the work the Senior Dog Warden has done in negotiating kennel space with local providers has meant we have not faced the same problems as previously and have been able to kennel and rehome additional dogs as commercial contracts. This year we have provided various aspects of dog related services for Birmingham City Council, Cheltenham Borough Council, The Dogs Trust, Gloucester City Council, North Somerset Council, Tewkesbury Borough Council and Worcestershire County Council amongst others.

Subsidised Pest Control & Worcester City Gull Control

Subsidised pest control treatment spend was up on last year's figures (except for Bromsgrove and Malvern Hills which were largely the same) but the service operated smoothly without significant issue. Two local authorities as reported required addition funds to cover the cost of treatment in their areas. As well as the domestic service, sewer baiting was undertaken in areas where issues had been reported by residents, pest controllers or Severn Trent Water.

Additional funding was approved by the City Council to enhance the gull control management this year which allowed an extensive programme of nest, egg and chick removal in the city centre, supported by deterrent hawking, disturbance tactics and gull proofing measures. All work was carried out in accordance with any conditions of the licences provided by Natural England where appropriate. The work was successful in bringing about significant local change such that some locations remained gull free. We continue to support Bath and North-East Somerset under contract with their gull control work following the successes had in Worcester.

Homes for Ukraine & Planning Enforcement support

Support has continued to be provided to Bromsgrove and Redditch Councils with the provision of the Homes for Ukraine scheme. This has involved host and guest checks, support and guidance as well as facilitating appropriate payments. This has been completed utilising staff formerly employed as COVID Advisors. Similarly, for Bromsgrove and Redditch, former Contact Tracing and Enforcement staff have continued to be utilised to support planning colleagues in tackling a backlog of planning enforcement issues. Most of these cases are live and going through the enforcement process.

Licensing

The theme of proactive enforcement and joint working continued throughout the year across all districts with officers working with internal and external partners including civil enforcement officers, community safety teams, West Mercia police colleagues, the County council and Worcester BID focusing on tackling issues in the Night Time Economy, taxi enforcement, street trading and animal licensing.

The other main focus has been on efficiencies and processes for not only officers but for residents, businesses and licensing applicants by firstly looking at a licensing triage process whereby officers across teams have been exploring how queries can be resolved more quickly at first point of contact so they do not always have to wait to speak to a technical officer. Secondly officers have been developing forms for the automation of data entry into our back office uniform system. This will allow

applicants to apply through an online form rather than officers inputting information manually and then this automatically inputs into the uniform database back office system.

Hackney Carriage and Private Hire

Councils have responsibility of licensing both the hackney carriage and private hire drivers to protect the public. The procedures that exist, and the process for obtaining a licence, are therefore in place to ensure each applicant is 'fit and proper' to hold a licence. The safeguarding of children, young people and adults at risk is vital and the Council want to strengthen safeguarding practice and raise awareness and standards within taxi licensing. License holders are the critical 'eyes and ears' of the community and often encounter people who may be vulnerable. In 2018 Licensing officers worked with partners across Worcestershire and offered a programme of child exploitation training (CSE) for all taxi drivers. The take up of training across the County was around 75% and although positive there still remains a proportion of licence holders that have not had safeguarding training at all or longer than 5 years ago.

Research by officers found that many neighbouring authorities and local authorities across the country used the implementation of the statutory standards as an opportunity to implement mandatory safeguarding training for their licence holders. The council did not do this at the time as intelligence data (including that from key partner agencies) did not indicate the presence of a live or emerging issue. Although this remains the case, the council recognises the role and responsibility that taxi drivers have in the economy and community, and it is important that the council proactively does all that it can to ensure drivers are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities. Officers believe this knowledge and training should be rolled out to all drivers including existing drivers that have not undertaken the competency certificate and the safeguarding module is one that all drivers should undertake. In order to address this a report rollout to all Licensing committees commenced and will continue into next year that recommends all taxi drivers receive safeguarding refresher training at each renewal of licence.

Non – surgical cosmetic procedures licensing regime

In February 2022, the Government announced its intention to introduce a licensing regime for non-surgical cosmetic procedures to ensure those that were responsible for carrying out the procedures were adequately trained and competent practitioners. Principal officers have been working closely with the Institute of Licensing as part of a working group to look at how and what this will look like in the future. In late 2023 a consultation was launched and results from that are now being scrutinised.

Alcohol, Entertainment and Gambling

The team have worked up a model that can be used and deployed for work in the night time economy and this has involved both partnership working and officers being proactive working out of hours and weekends during events and the warmer weather. Partnership working has influenced a lot of the teams work across this area this year with teams carrying out joint enforcement work across all six districts with partner authorities through information and data provided by the intelligence team. Officers assess intelligence from different sources prior to acting then use that intelligence to corroborate their findings.

Towards the end of the year saw a permanent regime introduced for pavement licensing. Pavement licenses are issued by the Council under the provisions of the Business and Planning Act 2020. The Business and Planning Act 2020 created a streamlined process to allow businesses to apply for a licence to place removable

furniture over certain highways adjacent to a premises in relation to which the application is made, for certain purposes. The Business and Planning Act 2020 was originally passed in summer 2020 in response to the significant adverse impacts the Covid-19 pandemic was having on businesses in the hospitality sector and was originally only intended to be in place for a short period of time. The purpose of the legislation was to make it quicker and simpler for businesses such as cafes, restaurants and bars to secure a licence to place furniture on the highway. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 made permanent the provisions set out in the Business and Planning Act 2020 and it is hoped that this will provide much needed ongoing support for businesses and protect as many hospitality jobs as possible, particularly during times of increasing living costs. The team have started to review this with a view to implement a consistent policy across all districts in the next financial year.

The Local Area Gambling Profile Refresh was produced after 5 years and officers continue to carry out inspections. The majority of the premises inspected by officers (betting shops, adult gaming centre and Bingo premises) continue to be well managed and compliant with licence conditions, staff were well informed and the required safer gambling measures all in place. The premises inspected were on the whole part of national chains so lots of internal measures and management were set out by the company/head office.

Animal Licenses

WRS continue to be well represented in this area of work as we sit on both the Licensing and Animal Welfare Group and the Canine, Feline Sector Group. Both of which have strong links with DEFRA and policy change. The team have seen a drop in new applications however renewals and interims are taking longer to inspect due to problems being found by officers. Most of this has been due to expenses remaining high post covid and businesses not being able to keep up with the requirements set out in the legislation. The team sometimes also have to take two members of staff depending on the size of the premises and if any intelligence has been received about them.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Budget 2022/23

Quarterly financial monitoring reports are provided to managers and finances are regularly considered by officers from the partners ahead of each Joint Board meeting. Bromsgrove DC operates a robust ordering and authorisation process to ensure the transparency and accuracy of costing. This year saw a slight overspend at year end of just under £1,200. Although the service had good income results and sensible spending programmes, it was not quite possible to bring in the amount of income necessary to cover the full costs of retaining the agency capacity undertaking food work that officer members of the Board had agreed following the Food Standards Agency intervention. Had this resource been released in February as originally planned it is likely that the service would have achieved break-even. With the additional funding and recruitment processes running into 2024/5, it is hoped to avoid a repeat of this next year.

The draft outrun budget for 2023/4 is included as Appendix 3, along with the budgets for 2024/5 onwards at Appendix 4, submitted to November 2023's Board for approval. These do not yet include the additional contributions made by Redditch and Bromsgrove to cover planning and enviro-crime enforcement, but members will

see this in the figures provided at the October 2024 meeting. The outrun position is subject to final audit, although the budget has now reduced so far that this is no longer a statutory requirement for specific audit of the WRS accounts. Hence, this will be done as part of the overall audit of Bromsgrove District Council's accounts.

Until 2020/21, the operating assumption was a cash standstill budget, with increasing income targets set to balance the budget each year. For that year and beyond, partners have recognised that the service's ability to increase income is limited and have agreed to fund the pay increases and the uplifts in pension contributions. Members recognised that the income generation progress could not deliver the increases expected, especially in the current climate with financial uncertainty and the level of inflation. This situation is unlikely to change in the immediate future with pay increases likely to be at last year's level and prices continuing to increase in some areas with alarming rapidity. Should it be necessary, the service's reserve may help partners to buffer some financial impacts were the financial model for the service to become difficult to maintain, allowing partners time to determine the way forward for the delivery of these functions. 2023/4 will be the first year that officers have had to ask members to exercise this ability.

WORKFORCE PLANNING AND HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

The WRS structure has now been in place since October 2015 with Simon Wilkes as the Head of Service with a team of four Manager posts looking after different areas of the service. David Mellors as Community Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager covering all the responsibilities of his Community Environmental Health team, (Food Safety, Health and Safety and Statutory Nuisance, with some other minor areas,) and the Trading Standards remit (Weights and Measures, Food and Agricultural Standards, Product Safety, Fair Trading, Animal Health) on a contractual basis since the County's departure from the partnership in 2016. Mark Cox continues to head up the Technical Services Team covering Technical Pollution (managing Planning, IPPC, Contaminated Land, Air Quality), Dog Wardens, Pest Control, Information Management & Database administration and more recently the first contact team of Duty Officers. Kiran Lahel heads up the Licensing and Support Services Team, with the Licensing team servicing all six district council Licensing committees as those decisions around policy remain devolved to the six partners, either for practical reasons or because the law (Licensing Act 2003, Gambling Act 2005,) requires it. The post of Business and Relationship Manager remains on the establishment should it be required for future activities, but currently the best vehicle for selling our services is peer-to-peer activity. The funding is currently re-deployed to roles supporting the Team Managers, enhancing our information and intelligence functions.

Staff turnover remains low, although we are starting to see older members of staff considering flexible retirement and one or two reducing their hours to allow them to commit to other activities away from the workplace. We have not seen any further losses to better paid roles with national public bodies, but as we said last year, the fact is that WRS continues to provide a solid platform for professional development shows that we retain our reputation for excellence. The new recruits from last year have settled in and their diverse backgrounds have brought a new dynamic to some of our income generation.

At the 1st April 2024, the core permanent staff establishment was around 70 FTE. There is also some capacity is on fixed term contracts and some supernumerary roles remain in place providing the Homes for Ukraine and Planning Enforcement capacity, all of which is funded directly by the relevant partners. Obviously, once the final steps to build planning and envirocrime enforcement for Bromsgrove and Redditch into the "day job" of WRS occur in June 2024, those staff will become part of the core establishment.

Maintaining competence remains central to our ability to deliver income and, helpfully more training is now being delivered in bite-sized chunks via Teams, making it easier and cheaper to hold onto relevance competencies. However, there will always be a need to undertake some face-to-face training, particularly where a course has to run over an extended period to embed new knowledge within the officer's understanding. As ever, we will look to use our usual PDR approach this year with a main one and a 6-month review to help identify what individuals need.

Staff Survey

52 of our staff cohort responded to the survey. As ever, some did not respond to all the questions. The satisfaction score is based on those who scored 5/10 or better for the question in the staff survey which asked, are you satisfied with working with WRS (score is from 0 to 10.) The figure obtained, of 94% is slightly higher than last year and remains excellent. Over 85% of staff who responded scored working for WRS at 8 or better out of 10, which is good news. Due to current time constraints, we have yet to do more detailed analysis of broader staff comments, but it is good to know that many are happy working for the service.

From the little review we have been able to do so far, there is still work to do on getting the teams working more closely, so we do need to make more effort with our cross-cutting activities. It is also clear that resources are stretched, and that people have limited thinking time or capacity for taking on more. This means that our work on directing resources to priority areas through intelligence will remain important going forwards.

Staff Sickness

During 2023/24 staff sickness reached 3.07 days per FTE, slightly above last year's 2.93 but well below the previous year's 5.2 and below the average for the 5 years including last (3.71 days/FTE.) Some 34% of the sickness was classed as long-term (i.e., periods lasting 29 days or more,) and can be influenced by a small number of people being off, either following surgery or other health issues. Whilst an aging service is likely to have a slightly higher rate of sickness due to natural causes, managers will continue to work to maintain the figures in the normal range of 3-6 days.

ACCOMMODATION

WRS remains located at Wyre Forest House, Finepoint Way, Kidderminster. The use of flexible and mobile working is generally now the norm, and has been expanded further during the pandemic, with staff frequently using home as their start and finish point for work in the field. Office based activity will remain important for team performance, identity, and morale so officers will continue to operate to a flexible pattern that facilitates this and provides face to face liaison with managers and colleagues or for meetings. The touch down points retained in each of the councils have provided an excellent venue for licensing appointments and these will be maintained on an appointment only basis, providing a useful balance between availability for the trade and efficiency of service delivery. Taxi drivers/ operators can be told what they will need over the telephone, ensuring that officer face-to-face time can be used more effectively to ensure complete applications are made and that paperwork has been completed correctly.

These work patterns enable staff to strike a better work/life balance which is essential for good morale, whilst maintaining the team ethos, having an organisation with which the staff identify and belong to, and giving the opportunity to share ideas and issues with other team members. Despite what those who evangelise about the benefits of virtual contact say, it does not build the kinds of trusting, working relationships necessary for the work that we do, so whilst we will be making more use of systems like Teams, it will not wholly replace face to face interaction between staff members.

BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION (SERVICE DELIVERY)

The Intelligence Operating Model is now the way we deliver our activities. The model of a Strategic Assessment for longer term priorities and Tactical Assessments for adjusting resource allocation to address emergent threats has long been the operating model in core policing and other law enforcement organisations, not only nationally but internationally too. WRS continues to lead in the wider regulatory environment, using what we learnt with our Trading Standards colleagues on how this model can support our activities.

The current Strategic Assessment recommends that the focus of activity should be around the following tactical priorities, which were in place for 2023/4 and will remain for 2024/5:

- Supporting a safe and vibrant night-time economy
- Promoting the responsible sale, breeding, and ownership of dogs.
- Promoting safe and clean communities
- Supporting commercial businesses to operate safely and responsibly.
- Supporting industry to operate safely and responsibly.

The Strategic Assessment will be refreshed in the Autumn to inform service planning from 2025/6 onwards.

Tactical assessments will review our data and intelligence against these, to support Team Managers and Principal Officers in determining activities to respond to the intelligence picture current at that time. Subject and problem profiles will provide a more in-depth look at issues or the entities creating them to support managers in their decision making. The top three priorities are cross cutting aspects of our work, and a Team Manager will take responsibility for each one, ensuring that work is done across the three teams that can contribute to related outcomes.

This year, our Intelligence Officer delivered training to all WRS staff on the basis of the operating model, what could be recorded via the intelligence system and how to go about it. There is often a misunderstanding that intelligence logging duplicates what is logged in our back office, which is not the case. The Intelligence Officer also wrote the training models that have been adopted as part of the IDB system, meaning it is now available to all subscribing authorities.

RISK MANAGEMENT

WRS recognises that the development of policy, delivery of service priorities and the management of its services for six partners attract risk. In reviewing its service risks and the effects of management strategies and policies WRS seeks to:

- Identify, assess, and manage risk,
- Safeguard the services assets and equipment,
- Focus on the delivery of its service to its customers.

The Service aims to ensure that Risk Management becomes a natural component of its management process and that when and where appropriate; risks are avoided, reduced, transferred, or retained. As part of these arrangements, a WRS risk register has been developed that can be integrated with the partners' individual risk registers. This register will be maintained and reviewed periodically to assess current risks and identify forthcoming priorities.

The current risk register at Appendix 2 was reviewed ahead of the 2024/5 service plan being produced. Many of the generic risks and mitigation have served us well during the pandemic and remain relevant. Flexible work patterns can create their own risks around feelings of isolation, lack of team identity and loss of belonging to the organisation and basic things like risk of muscular-skeletal injury because people spend long hours working at desks that are not ideal. So, whilst the service will continue to make more use of virtual meetings, they will never fully replace face to face interaction, nor will they lead to the abandonment of a physical location for the service.

Cyber-attack appears to be a growing risk and the service continues to work with our ICT host, Wyre Forest DC and Bromsgrove DC to limit this and help to ensure we have good business continuity measures in place. Updating and maintaining business continuity measures is something we need to get better at. One of the teams has undertaken an exercise that showed our staff can think quickly in event of things going wrong, but it helps if there is a ready plan and guidance for the most likely incidents. An on-going training programme of reminders for staff highlighting the preventive measures that must be followed to limit the wider risks around cyber-security is on-going. Last year's ban on XL Bully dogs showed our ability to address spikes in demand in this area, but the police's withdrawal of some support has also highlighted an area we will need to potentially reinforce.

Last year also saw us engage with the Food Standards Agency's in relation to our approach to lower risk premises. A return to a more traditional approach to inspection at low-risk premises has led to us including a specific line in the register to highlight the Agency's demand for "to the letter" compliance with the Local Authority Code of Practice on Food Law Enforcement. Whilst we will continue to shape what we do with intelligence, options around food to vary activity are somewhat more limited. The introduction of the revised version of the Local Authority Code has been delayed until at least 2027, so there are unlikely to be changes to their position in the intervening period.

Finally, there remain concerns going forward around public expectation around what is deliverable in law, particularly in relation to nuisance issues. The law is old and effectively what is a statutory nuisance is a matter of opinion rather than being based on any specific statutory levels of, for example noise. This is difficult for members of the public to accept but the service will look to improve its performance in the eyes of our non-business customers.

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

The news in recent years has frequently featured police and fire services being accused of not addressing equality and diversity. The Metropolitan Police and Greater London Fire and Rescue Service have been subject to damning headlines that many of us in the public sector would want to avoid. WRS is committed to equality of opportunity and respect for diversity. The service links in with the host Authority's adopted Equality Standard for Local Government as a framework to help embed equality and diversity into everyday aspects of its work. Equality issues have come to the fore in recent years with the Black Lives Matter movement highlighting racial inequalities but clearly there is a wider agenda for public services to address. The professional bodies for regulators are looking at how to respond and how to help make services be more reflective of communities they serve. Bodies like the Association of Chief Trading Standards Officers are trying support the leaders of our regulatory services to encourage diversity. I'm sure this is something that we will take on board at WRS and do our best to move forward in an inclusive way.

THE NEXT STEPS

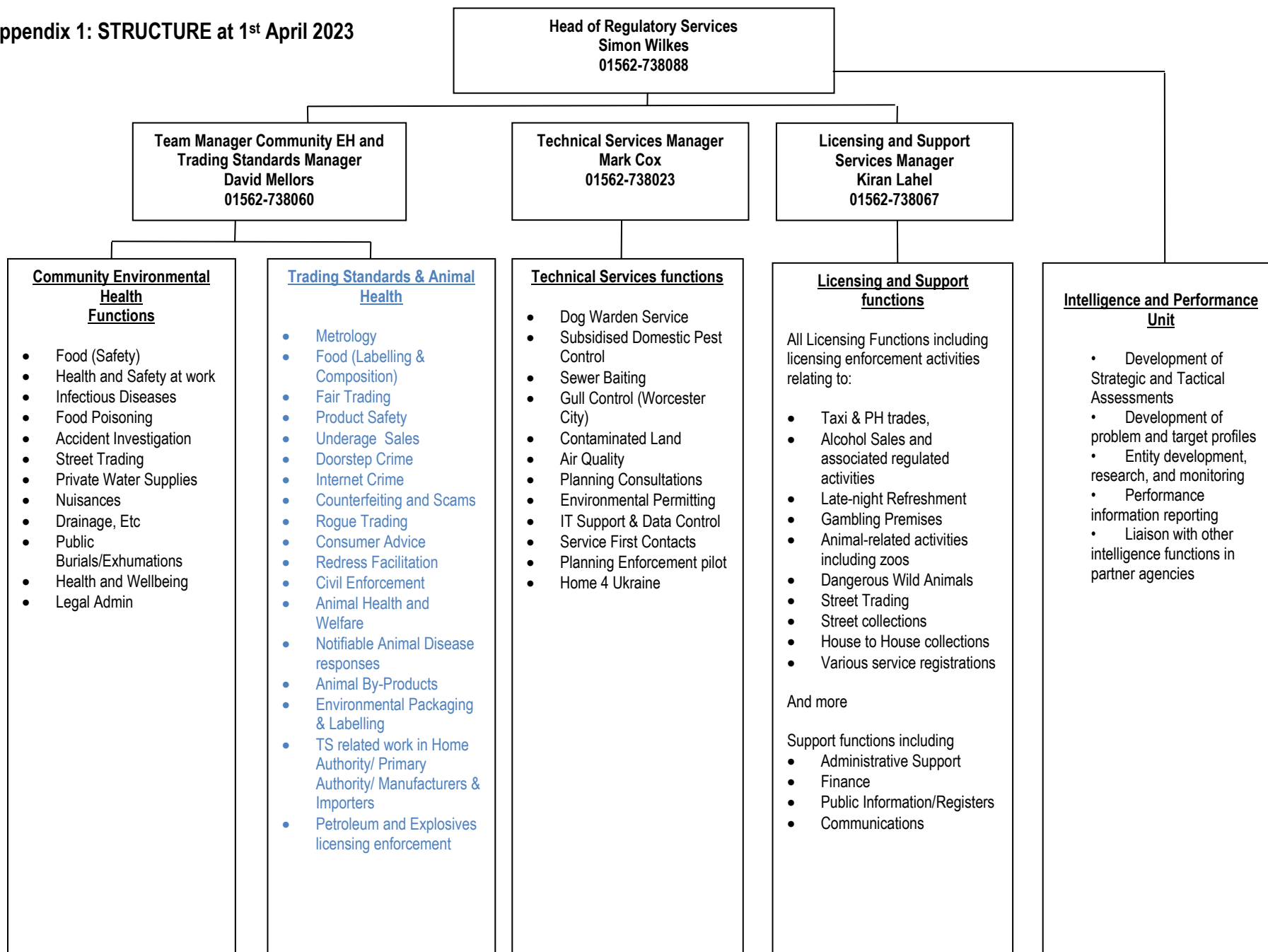
We are now back onto a business-as-usual footing post-pandemic so, going forward we will:

- Continue to deliver the WRS Business Plan and our annual operational service plans,
- Maintain existing income streams and looking at other ways of generating income for the service,
- Following our philosophy of continuous improvement, continue to review operations to improve marginal efficiencies,
- Continue the process of channel shift by increasing the customer's ability to use self-help, do transactions on-line and monitor progress of work.
- Continue to work closely with County Council Trading Standards colleagues and other partner agencies by maintaining links that support both WRS and other services to the benefit of local people.
- Continue to engage with partners to see if any other services could sit well on the WRS platform.

On this last point, by the time this report is published it is hoped that the planning work previously undertaken as a pilot for Bromsgrove and Redditch will formally be part of the business-as-usual activity of the service, with relevant member forums having passed the necessary resolutions to achieve this at the end of 2023/4. There remains the option for partners to follow suit, and as we mention in the WRS Business Plan there are likely to be other areas of enforcement that could equally find a home with WRS. Private Sector Housing enforcement is a particular area of interest for Government currently with major changes coming to local enforcement that will challenge existing resourcing arrangements and is a service area that would suite a shared service as we have seen various partner authorities requesting assistance from one another over the past couple of years. Having secured both petroleum licensing and safety at sportsgrounds work from the County Council, we will look at what other functions we might discharge for them too. There are likely to be further proposed changes to the legislative framework in the coming year as Government

continues to modernise some aspects of regulation. We will respond to consultations on behalf of the partners in relation to any proposed changes and, where we can, work with other colleagues in the region to help amplify the thinking of local authority officers across our area.

Appendix 1: STRUCTURE at 1st April 2023



Appendix 2 – WRS Risk Register 2024/5

Risk Description	Consequences	When is this likely to happen	Current Position			Control measures
			Likelihood	Impact	Matrix RAG Status	
Loss of Data through IT failures	Disruption to Service Provision. Inability to produce records and data.	On-going	Low	High	Green	Wyre Forest ICT has effective processes and business continuity plans in place. WFDC upgraded relevant systems including Windows. The service moved to Office 365 during 2021/22, which provides better access to a range of provisions including Microsoft Teams and Power BI.
Issues with the WRS database system	Impact on work planning. Self-help may not enable savings required	On-going	Low	High	Amber	Current contract due to be re-negotiated in February 2023. Work has commenced on negotiating new contract. The cost of moving systems is prohibitive currently and, whilst the system has its faults, it provides the necessary functionality and will allow the enablement of data transfer from electronic forms.
Effective and efficient Business Continuity arrangements in place	Disruption to service if e.g., Major Power failures or other reasons that access to Wyre Forest House is not possible.	On-going	Very Low	Medium	Amber	The pandemic has shown that we were well prepared for the need to maximise working from home and now all staff, including some previously regarded as office based can do this. Touchdown stations remain available in partner council locations. WRS Managers do need to redraft contingency plans in the event of a prolonged IT failure or cyber-attack that will allow services to be maintained.
Maintain our capacity to achieve service delivery	Disruption to service e.g., Major staff sickness (e.g., flu pandemic) or Unable to recruit or retain suitably qualified staff.	On-going	Low	Medium	Amber	The pandemic response has shown that the service was well-placed to respond to what was required.. Consultants are available to provide short term cover and, whilst this worked well in peacetime to cover peak demand periods, the pandemic has revealed the limits to this type of capacity. These pressures will only be resolved in the longer term by local and central government investing in additional capacity

						<p>and additional training to bring more people into the regulatory professions.</p> <p>Having taken on contracts with additional authorities the demand has increased, and neighbouring authorities have lost the ability to assist with some technical specialisms. This is the double-edged sword of effectively operating as a centre of excellence.</p> <p>Whilst we have good resource of our own, in event of an issue, there are limits to who we can ask for help. Regional and sub-regional groups are in place so can provide shared resources for local authorities if required.</p> <p>Effective training and development processes are in place to ensure recruitment and retention of staff.</p> <p>There is increased training budget pressure, reduced technical knowledge in neighbouring authorities and increased importance in maintaining heightened skills for contractual obligations and commercial edge.</p> <p>Regular inventory and maintenance of equipment is undertaken. In the future, budget for replace may be an issue but would be a relatively small amount for partners to share.</p>
Pest contractors cease operations.	Disruption to service. Negative media coverage. Increased public health risks	On-going	Low	High	Green	The Pest control framework contract has multiple pest control suppliers so the loss of one allows work to be moved to the others. This should limit or eliminate risk, although the unlikely loss of multiple companies might create capacity issues.
Effective and efficient contract arrangement for dog control	Disruption to service if no kennels available. Negative media coverage. Increased public health risks	On-going	Low	High	Amber	The Out of Hours and Kennelling contracts were re-tendered to enhance the existing arrangements and provide resilience however there are increases in numbers of stray dogs, dog disease and contracts are restricted by geographical location. Retendering for additional kennels remains difficult and consideration may be given to creating our own capacity.

Hosting support does not deliver necessary financial and HR support to ensure efficient management	Efficiency of management reduced; staffing issues remain unaddressed, and performance suffers	On-going	Low	High	Amber	Issues with the new BDC finance system have mainly been resolved, however some workarounds remain in place due to some unforeseen issues.
One or more partners continue to be under great financial pressure and may consider alternatives to the partnership to deliver their service	Creates reputational issues for remaining partners and increases the need to manage overheads. Difficulties in delivering highly varied levels of service	On-going	Medium	High	Amber	New legal agreement limits variations in contribution before partners must move to contractual relationship but this is quite high before it kicks in (20%.) Leanness of organisation minimises overheads and focuses resource at the front line. Growth strategy should generate income to support partners in the future but there are limits to this without additional capacity being added to the system. Invest to save capacity has been committed by partners to see if this achieves the necessary outcomes but even this is now fully occupied.
Robust arrangements in place in relation to obtaining legal advice and monitoring legislative changes.	Loss of cases is costly and damages reputation.	On-going	Low	Medium	Green	Continued close working with BDC legal team and other partners who don't use BDC for advocacy. Technical and legal training days for staff. Difficulty in keeping informed of Case Law developments. Membership and attendance of Officer Technical Groups outside the County does assist.
Service provision complies with Government requirements, New performance regimes are introduced that the service is not staffed to address	Intervention by Government bodies Other national bodies seek to introduce similar frameworks to the FSA Code to get what they regard as suitable minimum levels of service. We understand that Government is asking its central competent bodies to ensure that regulatory regimes are fit for purpose and do not pose a risk to UK exports post BREXIT as the UK no longer has the cover of the EU taking on this role. This may make new codes or performance	On-going	Low	High	Amber	Limited detail of what is required for statutory minima can make decision making difficult around what is required in law as a minimum. The LGA is clearly aware of impact of budget reductions on regulation and has made it clear Government cannot expect what it had previously. Fewer interventions/ audits by government. The Service has developed systems that follow the principles of the requirements of bodies like FSA so can show some level of compliance, but service isn't operating to the letter of the current Code. This has been noted by the Agency and they are now seeking to drive all authorities back into line with the Code, with the threat of ministerial direction if required. The

	<p>frameworks in areas outside of food law more likely.</p> <p>NB: Food Standards Agency is addressed below.</p>					<p>major changes envisaged for the Code have been delayed until 2027. And whilst this change is likely to move closer to the WRS model of operation, it is unlikely to wholly embrace the intelligence-led approach. See below for specific risk.</p> <p>Environmental reporting for Local Air Quality Management, Pollution Prevention and Control and Private Water Supply Inspection reports to Defra and DWI have received positive responses with no issues of concern raised by these bodies.</p>
Compliance with Food Code of Practice	Adverse comments following audits. FSA, can seek ministerial direction to make LAs comply with its Code of Practice	On-going	High	High	Amber/Red	<p>This is a subset of the section above line as FSA is the only body currently with a statutory code that LAs must have significant regard to, plus it has the power to apply for Ministerial Orders to force LAs to comply with the letter of the Code.</p> <p>Until recently the Agency appears to have been happy to allow LAs to experiment as long as they abide by the spirit of the code and resource the function at a reasonable level. It has now changed tack and is seeking to push local authorities to operate much more closely to the letter of the code in an effort to create additional resource. A paper went to the FSA Boar at the end of 2023, expressing concern about resourcing levels in both Env Health and Trading Standards resulting in a public call for local and central government to work together to remedy this.</p> <p>The partners are looking to make a significant investment in resources to address most of the Agency's concerns, but it will not allow full compliance with the Code. Having said this, there is limited risk in the variations that will remain in place and full compliance with the code would require a full redesign of operations within Community EH and further financial investment.</p>

Failure to deliver external contract work at the level expected by the business or local authority with whom we have the contract	Damage to reputation, loss of future income streams, financial impact of paying damages	On-going	Low	High	Green	Ensure contract negotiations are clear on performance criteria and these are clearly recorded in the final documentation. Monthly reviews against performance criteria. Select staff to ensure competence of those undertaking work outside Worcestershire. Maintain strong links with the customer's monitoring staff. Intervene early with corrective action
Failure to successfully transition the Planning and Envirocrime Enforcement functions to WRS	Damage to reputation, or enforcement cases	April to September 2024	Medium	Medium	Amber	Appropriate contract negotiations will set out the service level agreement (update to the Statement of Partner Requirements) and early recruitment will assist with reducing the risk of a successful transfer of service areas.

Appendix 3: Detailed out-turn for Regulatory Services 2022/23

	Full Year Budget 23-24	Committed Expenditure Apr - Mar 24	Variance
Direct Expenditure	£'000	£'000	£'000
Employees			
Salary	3,524	3,400	-124
Agency Staff	25	328	303
Employee Insurance	25	21	-3
Sub-Total - Employees	3,574	3,749	176
Premises			
Rent / Hire of Premise	74	74	0
Cleaning	1	0	-0
Utilities	0	0	0
Sub-Total - Premises	75	75	-0
Transport			
Vehicle Hire	20	11	-8
Vehicle Fuel	8	6	-2
Road Fund Tax	1	1	-0
Vehicle Insurance	5	4	-1
Vehicle Maintenance	3	1	-2
Car Allowances	56	41	-15

Sub-Total - Transport	92	64	-28
Supplies and Services			
Furniture & Equipment	39	84	44
Clothes, uniforms and laundry	2	2	1
Printing & Photocopying	17	11	-6
Postage	11	12	1
ICT	67	70	3
Telephones	21	37	16
Training & Seminars	22	25	3
Insurance	20	9	-10
Third Party Payments	194	195	1
Sub-Total - Supplies & Service	393	446	53
Contractors			
Dog Warden	121	261	139
Pest Control	105	120	15
Taxi / Alcohol / & Other Licensing	70	98	28
Other contractors/consultants	3	1	-1
Water Safety	5	7	2
Food Safety	1	0	-1
Environmental Protection	12	59	47
Grants / Subscriptions	13	15	2
Advertising, Publicity and Promotion	6	4	-1
Sub-Total	335	566	231

Income

Training Courses / Bereavement /
Works in Default / Sewer Baiting
etc

-703 -1,133 -430

Sub-Total

-703 -1,133 -430

Net Position

3,766 3,767 1

Appendix 4: 3-year budgets 2024/25 to 2026/27 agreed at November 2023

Account description	Budget 2024 / 2025 £000's	Budget 2025 / 2026 £000's	Budget 2026 / 2027 £000's
Employees			
Monthly salaries	3667	3765	3857
Training for professional qualifications	0	0	0
Medical fees (employees')	2	2	2
Employers' liability insurance	21	21	21
Employees' professional subscriptions	3	3	3
Sub-Total - Employees	3692	3790	3882
Premises			
Rents	77	80	83
Room hire	2	2	2
Trade Waste	1	1	1
Sub-Total - Premises	80	83	86
Transport			
Vehicle repairs/maintenance	3	3	3
Diesel fuel	8	8	8
Licences	1	1	1
Contract hire of vehicles	4	4	4
Vehicle insurances	5	5	5
Van Lease	9	9	9
Fares & Car Parking	5	5	5
Car allowances	50	50	50
Sub-Total - Transport	84	84	84
Supplies & Service			

Equipment - purchase/maintenance/rental	29	29	29
Materials	9	9	9
Clothing, uniforms & laundry	2	2	2
General insurances	16	16	16
Printing and stationery	17	17	17
Books and publications	2	2	2
Postage/packaging	11	11	11
ICT	67	67	67
Telephones	37	37	37
Taxi Tests	14	14	14
CRB Checks (taxi)	26	26	26
Support service recharges	126	130	134
Support service recharges - ICT	74	77	80
Sub-Total - Supplies & Service	452	459	466
Contractors			
Consultants / Contractors' fees/charges/SLA's	246	241	241
Advertising (general)	6	6	6
Grants and subscriptions	13	13	13
Sub-Total - Contractors	264	259	259
Total Expenditure Budget	4572	4675	4777
Income			
Grants / Primary Authority / Food Training / Contaminated Land / Stray Dogs / Ad Hoc	-407	-407	-407
Funding from Bromsgrove & Redditch for Enforcement Work	-195	-201	-208
Sub-Total - Income	-602	-608	-615
Income			
Funding from partners for Technical Officers	-117	-115	-117

Funding from partners for Increase in Rent	-5	-8	-11
Funding from partners for Increase in ICT	-4	-7	-11
Funding from partners for Increase in Hosting Charges	-5	-9	-13
Funding from partners due to unavoidable salary pressures 23-24	-115	-115	-115
Funding from partners due to unavoidable salary pressures 24-25	-113	-113	-113
Funding from partners due to unavoidable salary pressures 25-26		-88	-88
Funding from partners due to unavoidable salary pressures 26-27			-82
Sub-Total - Income	-359	-455	-550
Additional Income			
Agreed reduced charge to Worcester City Council	-30	-30	-30
Sub-Total - Income	-30	-30	-30
Total Income Budget	-991	-1093	-1195
DISTRICT PARTNERSHIP BUDGET	3581	3581	3581
24-25 Partner Percentages	%'s		
Bromsgrove District Council	14.45%		
Malvern Hills District Council	13.13%		
Redditch Borough Council	17.68%		
Worcester City Council	16.07%		
Wychavon District Council	23.43%		
Wyre Forest District Council	15.24%		
Total	100.00%		

Additional costs for posts for new or additional activities will be allocated using this formula unless the work is requested by either one partner or a group of partners, where the full cost of the new function must be covered by those partners requesting the additionality.

The table below covers off the additional payments that are likely to flow from the current allocations of additional funding for the additional Technical Officer capacity required for several pieces of work and to cover the salary and pension pressures going forward.

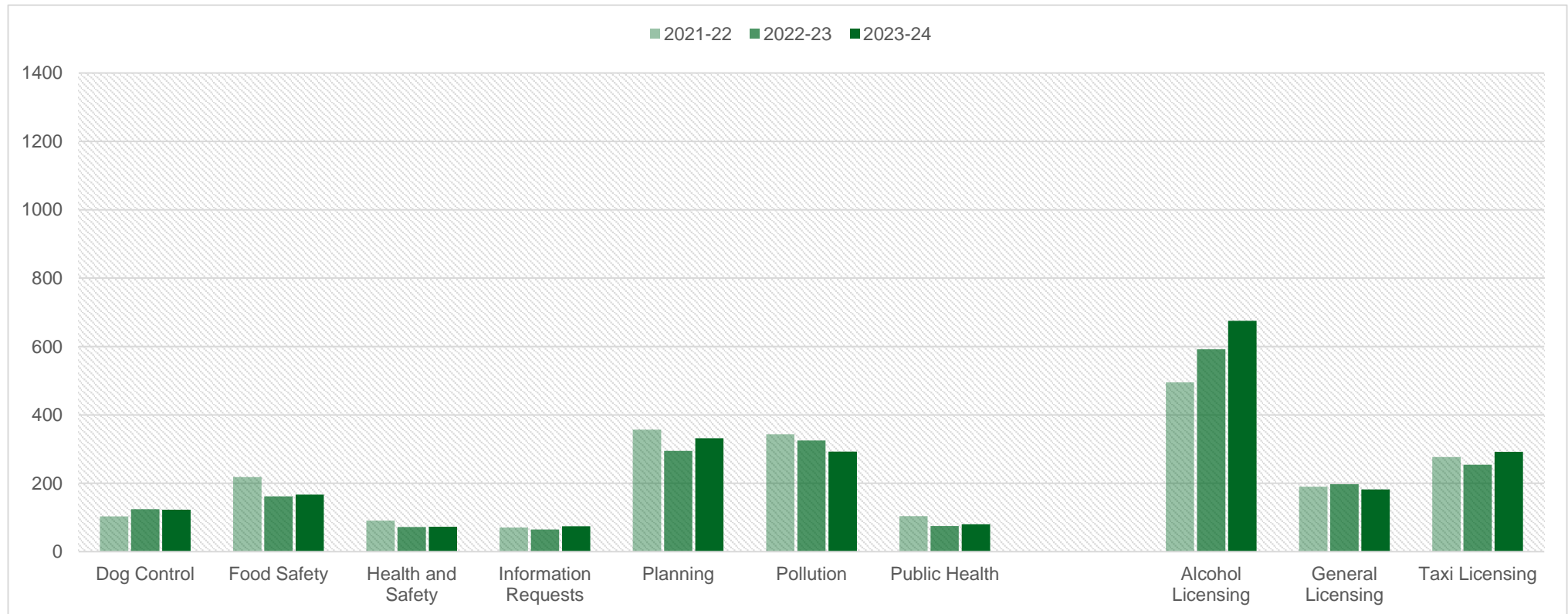
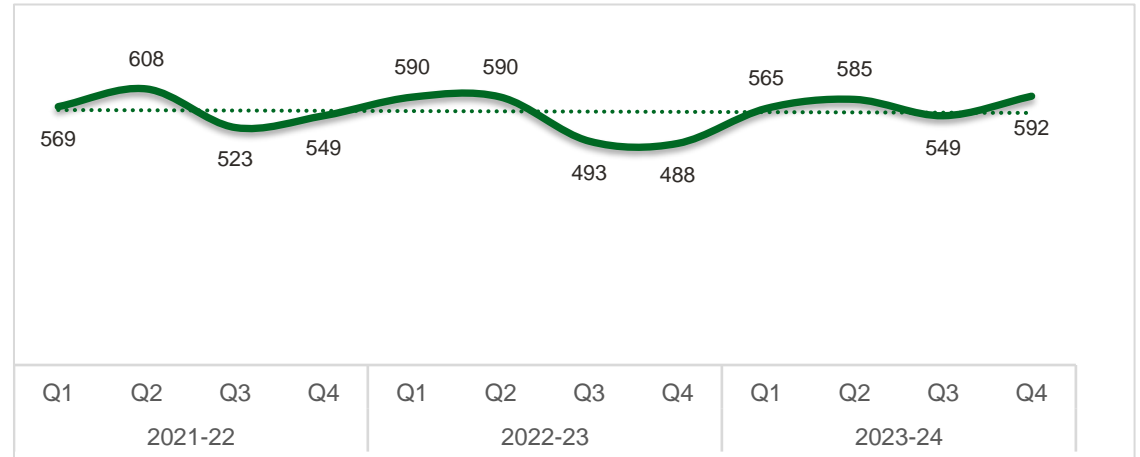
	Budget	Change in Taxi Test Policy	Agreed reduced charge to Worcs City	Contribution Technical Officers	Contribution Increase in Rent, ICT & Hosting Charges	Unavoidable Salary Pressures	Total Partner Contribution
	2024 / 2025	2024 / 2025	2024 / 2025	2024 / 2025	2024 / 2025	23-24 & 24-25	2024 / 2025
Budget 2024 / 25	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Bromsgrove District Council	526	-8		208	2	33	761
Malvern Hills District Council	471			19	2	30	522
Redditch Borough Council	633			9	2	40	685
Worcester City Council	605		-30	44	2	37	658
Wychavon District Council	840			21	3	54	918
Wyre Forest District Council	546			11	2	35	594
Total	3,621	-8	-30	312	14	229	4,138
	Budget	Change in Taxi Test Policy	Agreed reduced charge to Worcs City	Contribution Technical Officers	Contribution Increase in Rent, ICT & Hosting Charges	Unavoidable Salary Pressures	Total Partner Contribution
	2025 / 2026	2025 / 2026	2025 / 2026	2025 / 2026	24-25 & 25-26	23-24, 24-25 & 25-26	Total Partner Contribution
Budget 2025 / 26	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Bromsgrove District Council	526	-8		215	3	46	782
Malvern Hills District Council	471			19	3	42	535
Redditch Borough Council	633			9	4	56	703
Worcester City Council	605		-30	40	4	51	670
Wychavon District Council	840			21	6	74	941

Wyre Forest District Council	546			12	4	48	610
Total	3,621	-8	-30	316	24	317	4,240
	Budget	Change in Taxi Test Policy	Agreed reduced charge to Worcs City	Contribution Technical Officers	Contribution Increase in Rent, ICT & Hosting Charges	Unavoidable Salary Pressures	Total Partner Contribution
	2026 / 2027	2026 / 2027	2026 / 2027	2026 / 2027	24-25, 25-26 & 26-27	23-24, 24-25, 25-26 & 26-27	Total Partner Contribution
Budget 2026 / 27	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Bromsgrove District Council	526	-8		222	5	58	803
Malvern Hills District Council	471			20	4	52	548
Redditch Borough Council	633			10	6	71	719
Worcester City Council	605		-30	40	6	64	685
Wychavon District Council	840			22	8	93	963
Wyre Forest District Council	546			12	5	61	624
Total	3,621	-8	-30	326	34	399	4,342

Appendix 5: District Council Summaries

The chart (right) shows the volume of Environmental Health and Licensing cases where the subject and/or enquirer were in the **Bromsgrove** district. This includes complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications.

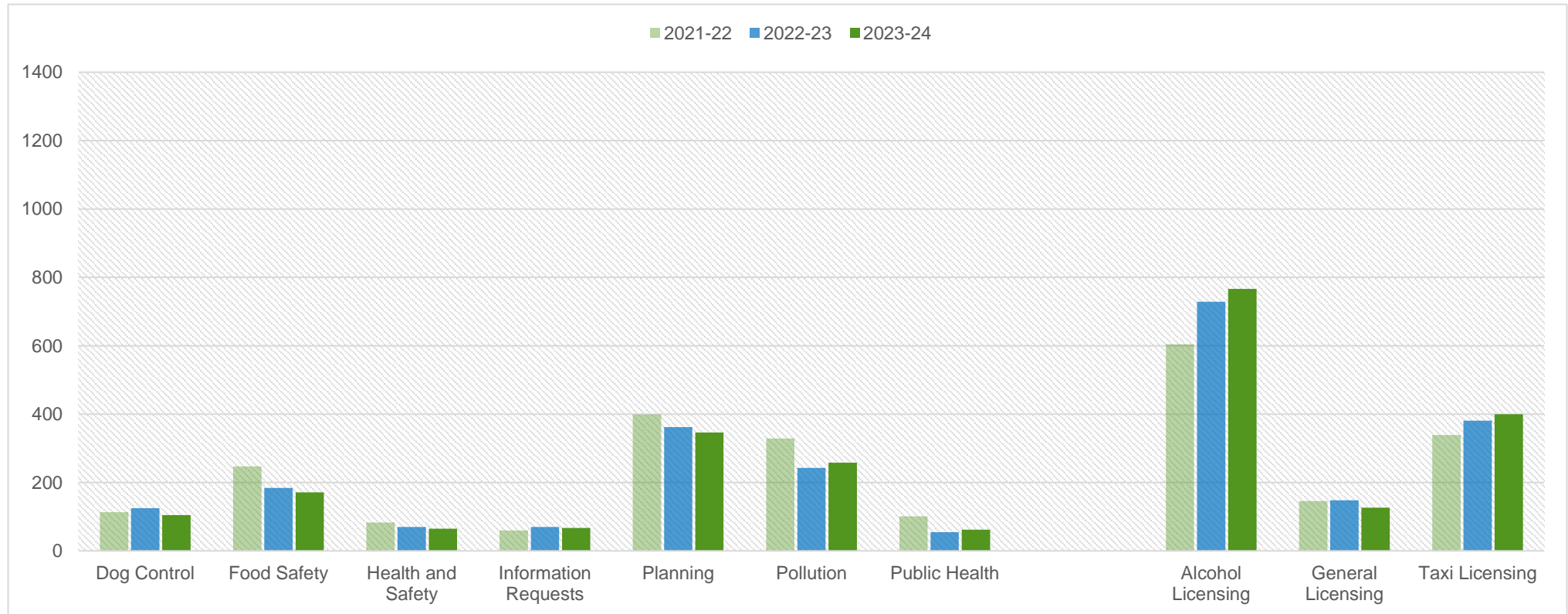
The chart (below) shows the volume of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by the service. Please note the Y axis has been standardised to reflect the level of demand seen across each of the six districts.



Appendix 5: District Council Summaries

The chart (right) shows the volume of Environmental Health and Licensing cases where the subject and/or enquirer were in the **Malvern Hills** district. This includes complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications.

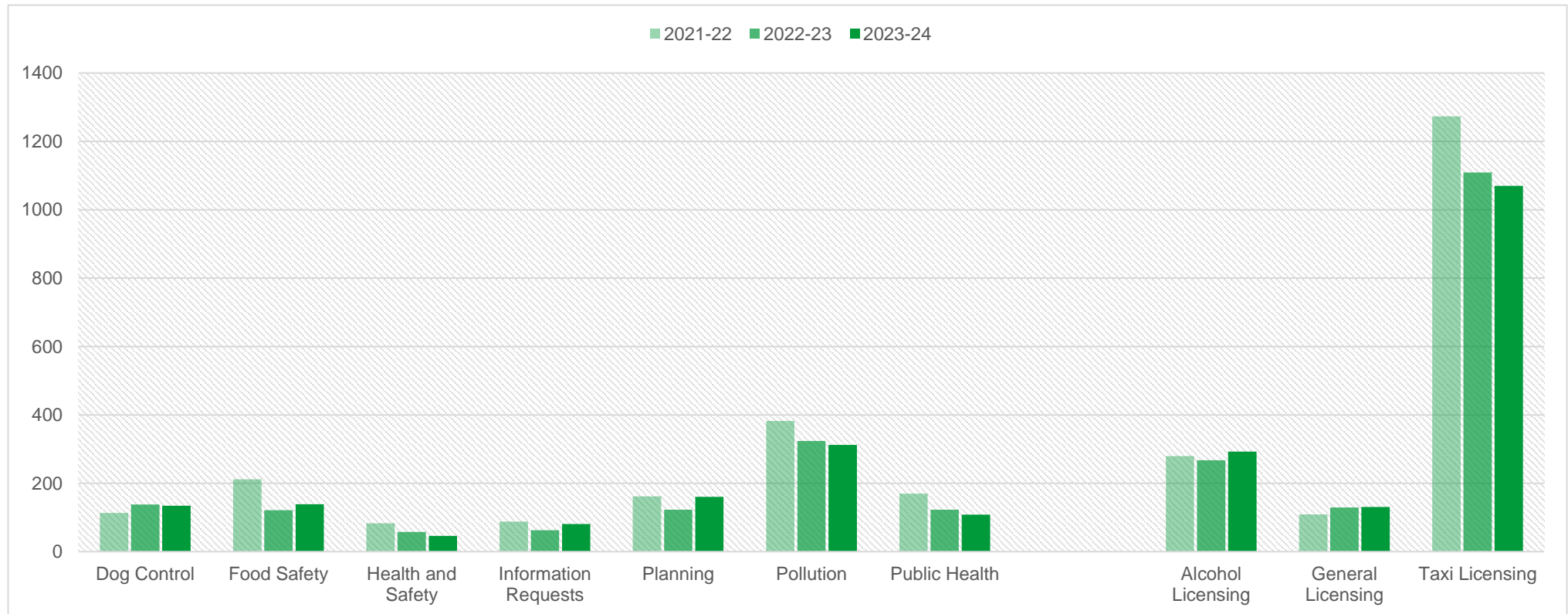
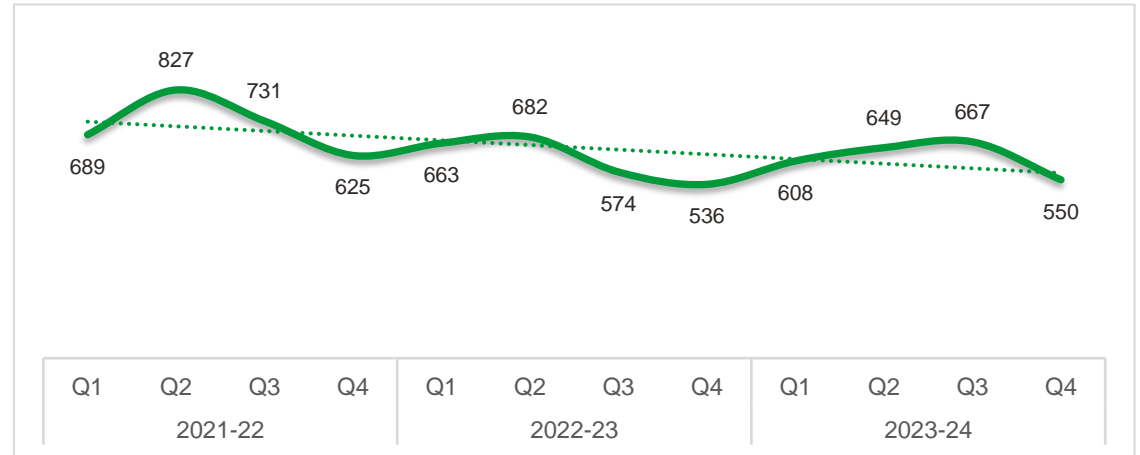
The chart (below) shows the volume of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by the service. Please note the Y axis has been standardised to reflect the level of demand seen across each of the six districts.



Appendix 5: District Council Summaries

The chart (right) shows the volume of Environmental Health and Licensing cases where the subject and/or enquirer were in the **Redditch** district. This includes complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications.

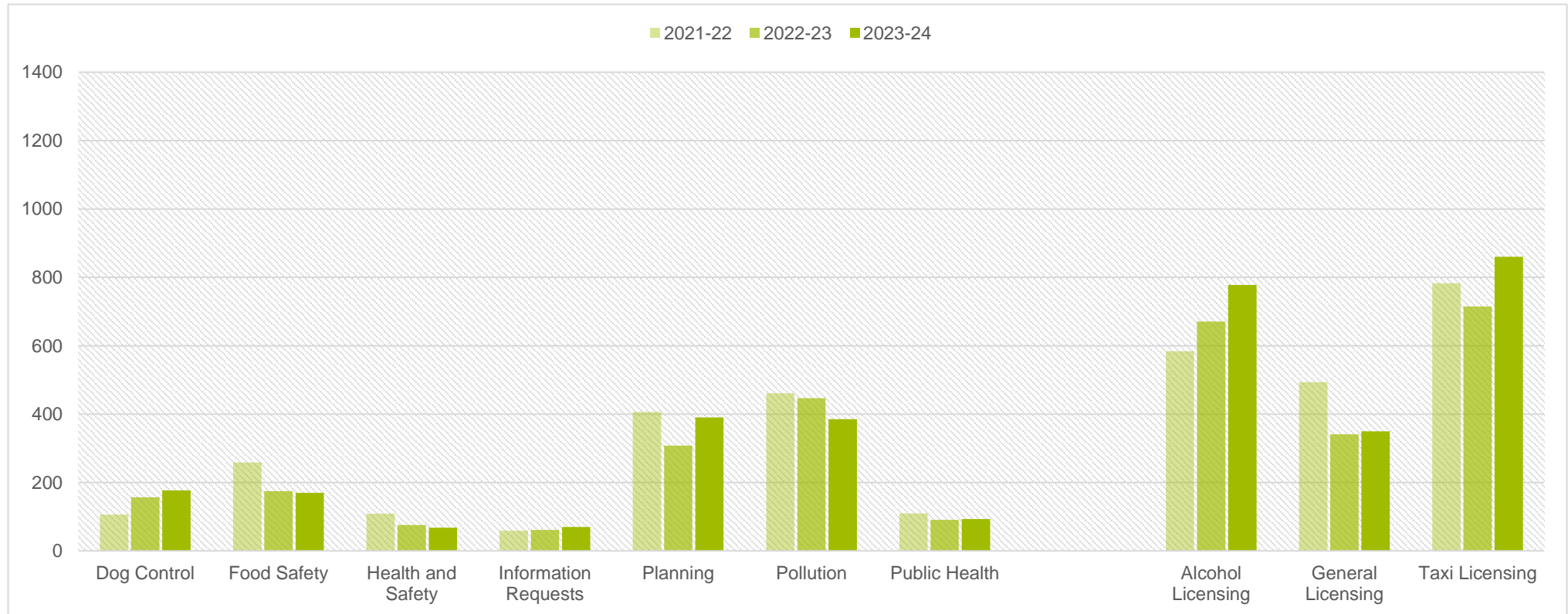
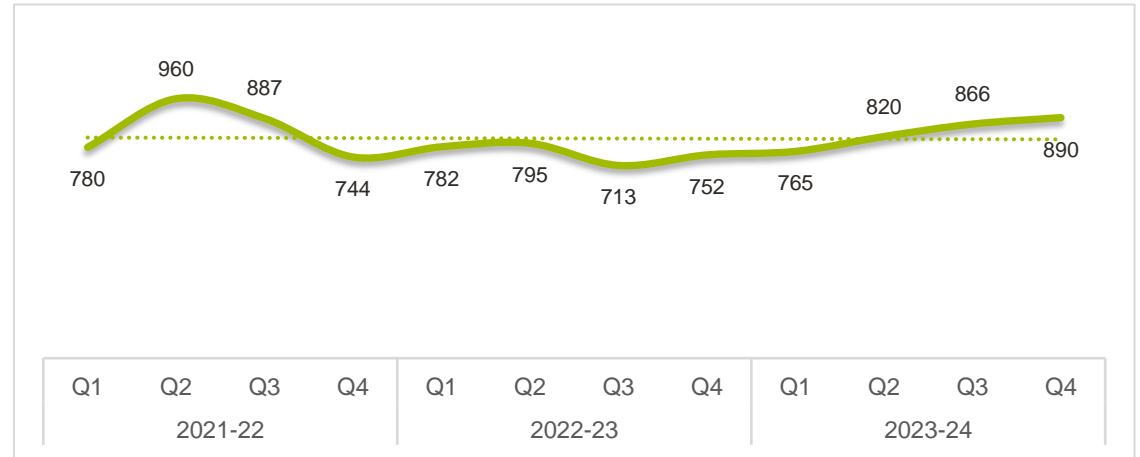
The chart (below) shows the volume of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by the service. Please note the Y axis has been standardised to reflect the level of demand seen across each of the six districts.



Appendix 5: District Council Summaries

The chart (right) shows the volume of Environmental Health and Licensing cases where the subject and/or enquirer were in the **Worcester City** district. This includes complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications.

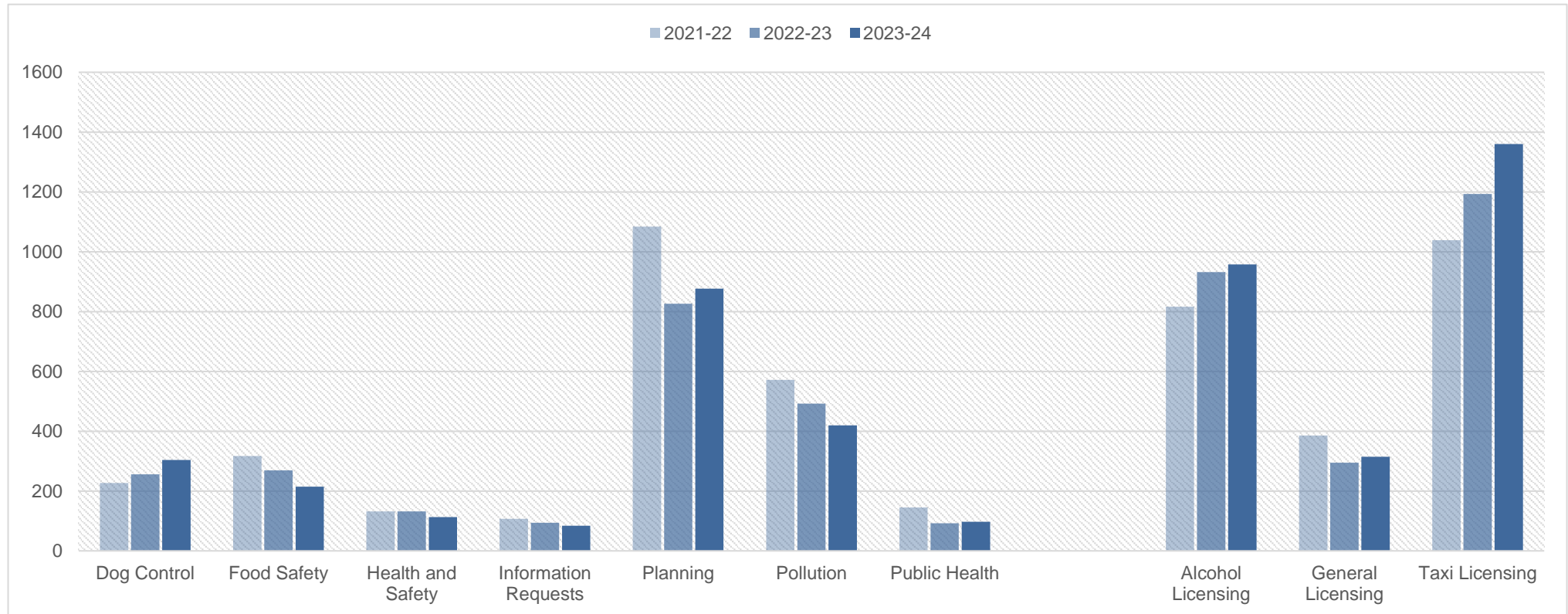
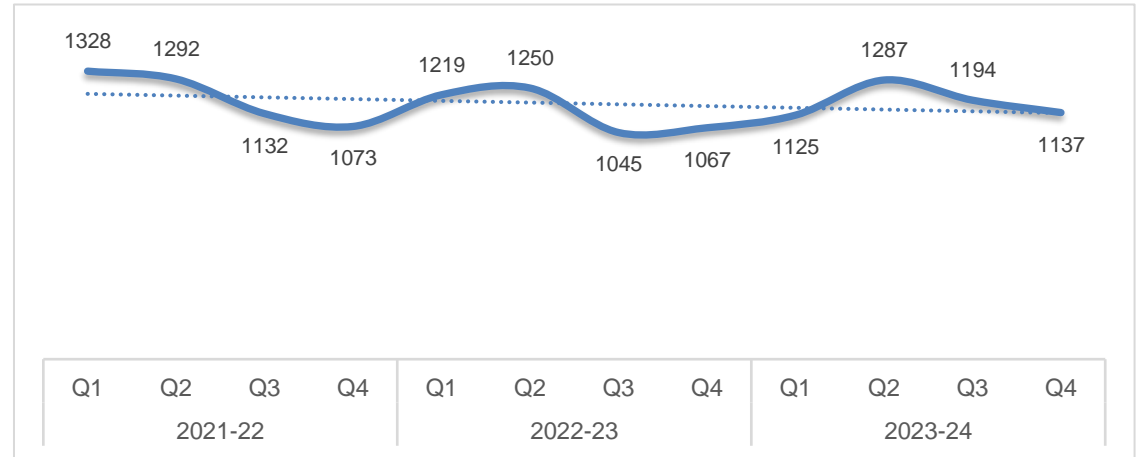
The chart (below) shows the volume of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by the service. Please note the Y axis has been standardised to reflect the level of demand seen across each of the six districts.



Appendix 5: District Council Summaries

The chart (right) shows the volume of Environmental Health and Licensing cases where the subject and/or enquirer were in the **Wychavon** district. This includes complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications.

The chart (below) shows the volume of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by the service. Please note the Y axis has been standardised to reflect the level of demand seen across each of the six districts.



Appendix 5: District Council Summaries

The chart (right) shows the volume of Environmental Health and Licensing cases where the subject and/or enquirer were in the **Wyre Forest** district. This includes complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications.

The chart (below) shows the volume of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by the service. Please note the Y axis has been standardised to reflect the level of demand seen across each of the six districts.

