

## WRS Board

Date: 26<sup>th</sup> June 2025

### Title: Worcestershire Regulatory Services Annual Report 2024/5

#### Recommendation

That the Board notes the Annual Report for 2024/5 and agree that a copy be forwarded to each Chief Executive of the 6 partner authorities and to the wider elected member base in their areas.

#### Contribution to Priorities

Not applicable

#### Summary

Under the Worcestershire Shared Services Partnership Service Level Agreement, the Head of Worcestershire Regulatory Services and the Lead Finance Officer for the host authority, Bromsgrove District Council, are required to submit to the Joint Board an annual report that covers the performance of the shared service and provides a summary of the finances. This report covers the period from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 to 31 March 2025. If endorsed by the Joint Board, a copy will be forwarded to each Chief Executive of each member authority, and the authors would request that members use their usual channels within their authorities to distribute the report to the wider elected member cohort.

#### Report

Under Clause 11 of Part 1 of the Shared Services Partnership Agreement, the Board is required to receive a report at its annual meeting which will be held no later than 30 June each year. The report covers the period from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. The annual report is co-signed by the Head of Worcestershire Regulatory Services and the Lead Financial Officer for the Host Authority as required by the legal agreement.

The report covers the performance of the service for that period, both in terms of KPIs and highlights of activity, a short summary activity report appearing at Appendix 5, which we limit due to the detail that Board members will see in the Activity Data Report. Some detail of the performance indicators has also been covered by the Activity data.

Last year saw the continuation of what we might call the “post-covid normal,” levels of activity post pandemic. Previous years saw the

establishment of what might be regarded by many as the new patterns of behaviour and activity that the service will face for the foreseeable future.

The service continued to utilise some of the staff recruited during the pandemic to support work under contract to discharge the Homes 4 Ukraine support for Redditch and Bromsgrove, with support from experienced WRS managers, while several other former covid staff also feature in the planning enforcement and enviro-crime enforcement team.

Despite these additional commitments, performance has remained good in most areas. Food business compliance rates remain high. Taxi license renewals have been dealt with in a reasonable time in the main. The taxi fleet appears to be generally in good order, although the number of vehicles failing either when submitted to a garage for interim test or, to a lesser extent, whilst in-service remains higher than general rates pre-pandemic. This is almost certainly a result of the financial pressure on members of the trade due to the current cost of living pressures.

As with previous years, complaints against the service are significantly exceeded by compliments. Complaints arose across a number of service areas this year, rather than being focused in one or two. The main issues for complainants related to:

- Turn-around time for some licenses, despite generally good performance,
- Dissatisfaction from businesses with actions taken in relation to enforcement including areas like food hygiene, health and safety, and the control of animal activity licenses,
- Response to nuisance issues, especially where things don't meet the threshold for intervention.
- Occasional issues with the way dog issues were handled and a small number related to planning enforcement.

Non-business customer satisfaction was down on the last 2-year's figures at 56.7% compared to 59.2% and 60.4%. Further detail on this is provided in both the Annual Report itself and Activity Report. The range of areas for complaint was greater this year, with licensing featuring quite strongly, particularly with animal related businesses where inspection visits revealed significant failings with requirements. Whilst numbers of nuisance complaints were lower last summer, other pressures in the Community Environmental Health team meant that resources were still spread very thin.

Managers will continue to work to address this performance measure. The nature of the service is such that we will never be able to make everyone happy because a significant proportion of nuisance complaints will not amount to a statutory nuisance, but we know that we can improve our performance in this area.

Business satisfaction returned to usual levels at 97.1% compared with 94.6% last year, so unless we see otherwise, we are treating this as a blip.

The indicators for licensed premises and noise complaints have been in place long enough now for us to establish good baselines. This year all figures are at average or below, so significantly better than last year. 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 situation appeared to be improving before last year's result; however, this year has shown a fall in issues. Perhaps we can assume for now that last year was a blip in the figures. Only time will tell. The weather last year for most of the summer and autumn was poor, which may help explain the figures too. It should be noted that this only records the level of accusations of breaches. We can confirm that there has not been an increase any kind of formal action, and the figures still show that most premises across the County are well run and controlled by their operators, with issues limited to a small minority.

The rate of noise complaint against population for all districts this year are reporting their lowest figures since the indicator was introduced. We know that last year saw a poor weather for a significant part of the year, which undoubtedly contributed to this. Overall, it still suggests that the environment for Worcestershire residents is good.

The Annual Report also gives a summary of the financial position, the key achievements and covers issues relating to human resources. There are also sections on risk management and equalities. The Report will be published on the WRS website and will be shared with other partners e.g., Worcestershire LEP. Putting the report into the public domain meets the requirement in the Regulators Code, made under the Regulatory Enforcement and Sanctions Act 2008, which requires local authorities to publish summary information about their regulatory activities each year.

## **Financial Implications**

The financial implications are contained within the Annual Report.

## **Contact Points**

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## **Background Papers**

WRS Annual Report 2024/5