

WRS Board

Date: 26th June 2025

Title: Activity and Performance Data Quarters 1, 2 3 and 4 2024/5

Recommendation

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

Background

The detail of the report focuses on the final quarter of 2024/5, but the actual data allows comparison with previous quarters and previous years.

Contribution to Priorities

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

Report

Activity Data

The number dog of cases received during the year was 18% higher than 2022/23 and 7% higher compared to 2023/24. This is a far cry from the pre-pandemic period when we were routinely reporting falls in numbers of dog cases. We can only assume that it is due to the huge increase in dog ownership that occurred during the pandemic. Hopefully the fact that last year's increase was lower than the previous year means we will soon see a peak in activity.

Approximately 88% of cases in the system were reports of lost or stray dogs, with most cases categorised as "contained strays" (i.e., dogs found and held by members of the public). During the year officers noted an increase in the number of dogs picked up with welfare concerns that subsequently required veterinary treatment or examination. Approximately 44% of dogs were successfully reunited with their owners although this figure varies significantly between local authorities.

Complaints regarding dog control are relatively few in number each quarter. Only 92 were received during the year, with 40 cases relating to dogs that were persistently straying from residential properties and 35 of dog fouling.

The number of food cases received during the year is broadly comparable to 2022/23 but a 7% lower than last year. Most cases tend to be enquiries, including requests for business advice. Of the actual complaints received during the year, some 70% related to issues with food products such as poor-quality food or food containing a foreign body, and 30% related to poor hygiene standards or practices at food businesses. We know from previous experience that these latter complaints seldom lead to a down-rating of premises below 3, so these are reviewed before that are actioned to see if there are other reasons to believe that action may be required.

Based on the 1,722 interventions undertaken during the year, as has been the case for some years now, only a small proportion of businesses were rated as "non-compliant" (issued a rating of 0, 1, or 2 FHRS score). A significant proportion of non-compliant ratings were issued to the hospitality sector (such as takeaways and pubs) or small retailers. To find out more about food hygiene ratings, please visit <https://ratings.food.gov.uk>.

The number of health and safety at work cases received last year fell by 9% compared to 2022/23 but was 3% higher than last year. Just over 40% of cases were reports of accidents in workplaces, with most cases relating to injuries where a worker was incapacitated for more than seven days or injuries to members of the public. The most common cause of accidents continues to be slips, trips and falls (whether on the same level or from height). Sadly, the service began investigating a fatality during quarter two after a contractor working at a retail outlet was crushed by a piece of mechanical equipment, and several others were still in process. However, since year-end, a number of these long-standing cases have been closed with either warnings or no further action in one case.

The number of licensing cases received during the year is 3% higher than 2022/23 but 4% lower than last year. Licensing demand has appeared relatively predictable looking back at levels in recent years. Around 65% of cases recorded are applications and registrations, with private hire or hackney carriage vehicles representing 31% of demand and 24% from temporary events notices served on the six councils under the Licensing Act 2003.

The Licensing team receives a significant number of enquiries each year, such as queries about regulations, by-laws, and licence condition. Actual complaints about conduct of license holders and businesses are fewer in number, with approximately 49% relating to taxi licensing (i.e., poor driver behaviour, unauthorised parking, or poor driving standards, etc,) and 22% related to alcohol licensing, and allegations of business failing to uphold the licensing objectives. A further 13% of complaints have related to animal licensing with most cases relating to the unlicensed breeding and/or sale of dogs.

Planning enquiries have continued to grow in number with this year's total being 35% higher than 2022/23 and 21% higher than last year. Approximately 90% of logged enquiries related to consultations for air quality, contaminated land, or nuisances. This area of work remains one that is in demand from clients beyond the Worcestershire border with around 1 in 4 enquiries being processed on a contractual basis for other

local authorities.

After the peak in Q4 2023/4 and Q1 2024/5, numbers of information requests (EIR/FOI) dipped in Q2 and increased across Q3 and 4 but did not quite return to that earlier peak level. We often see these requests, EIRs in particular, linked to planning work, but this is not always the case.

There is currently no comparable temporal data available for the planning enforcement and enviro-crime functions that are now being discharged for Bromsgrove and Redditch, with the work only formally coming into the Board's remit in June last year. Based on the 762 cases investigated from then to the end of the financial year, some 65% have related to fly-tipping whilst 16% have related to planning breaches at residential properties.

As this is a new service area for WRS, processes and priorities continue to be developed and adapted to tackle issues, however there are a number of priority work areas which include: enforcement at fly-tipping hotspots, clearing a backlog of legacy planning enforcement cases, and streamlining/standardising the approach to tackling cases relating to untidy land. As can be seen from the graph, during much of Q1 WRS was working mainly on Bromsgrove and Redditch Planning Enforcement enquiries under the then contractual arrangement. From 1st June, when Enviro-crime was formally added to this and matters moved under the Board, complaint numbers rose significantly. Most of the fall in numbers shown in the graph relates to a seasonal reduction in the number of fly tipping incidents (and therefore investigations) but is also partly due to the number of 'legacy' cases that were passed over in June being reviewed and either resolved or closed.

The overall number of nuisance-type cases received during 2024/5 tells a tale of poor weather, with the figures showing a 29% fall compared to 2022/23 and 20% compared to 2023/24. As ever, 90% of cases were reports of alleged statutory nuisances with around 44% of cases relating to noise from domestic properties such as noise from barking dogs or noise from audio-visual equipment. Other prominent nuisances commonly included noise from hospitality businesses, smoke from the burning of domestic or commercial waste, and dust from construction sites.

The number of what we call public health cases, which are often tied into nuisance from a legislative perspective, was broadly comparable to 2022/23 but 5% lower than 2023/24. Almost 60% of these cases related to pest control such as enquiries about domestic treatments, enquiries about sewer baiting, or complaints about pest activity caused by the actions of neighbouring residents or businesses. A further 24% related to accumulations of various types at residential properties, sometimes but not exclusively of waste materials of various kinds. Such complaints also commonly reference the presence of rodents or other pests; however, it is not always the case and officers do find that sometimes this is more of a fear for neighbours than a reality.

Based on the 792 domestic treatments undertaken by pest control contractors during the year to date, 51% were due to issues with rats whilst 66% have taken place at properties in the Redditch or Wychavon district.

Homes for Ukraine

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. More details are provided in the Annual Report.

Performance

The year was mixed again from a customer satisfaction perspective with the level for business customers returning to its usual 97/ 98% from last year's 94.6% low, but the non-business customer measure closed at 56.7% compared with 60.4% and 59.2% respectively in the last 2 years.

More detail on these is contained in the Annual Report. With non-business customers, resources to address nuisance complaints continue to be stretched during the Summer, although last year was quieter than some due to the relatively poor weather. Managers will continue to look at how to improve performance in several 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 were worse this year than previously with only 104 responses, compared to 161 and 138 in the previous 2 years, neither of which is good. Literally hundreds of requests for responses (712 to non-business and 3360 to business,) a mix of digital and paper questionnaires were sent out, but it is very difficult to get replies. For the business measure, only 246 customers responded. In better scoring years we would expect 200-250 responses from non-business customers and perhaps beyond 300 in a good year from businesses. Clearer communication and officers maintaining agreed contact intervals with complainants may improve this situation. Whilst we will never achieve total satisfaction because of the nature of our work, we know we can do better than this.

People who felt better equipped to deal with issues ended the year at 53.4% below the figures in the previous 3 years (56.6%, 57%, and 58.5%,) but it should be noted that a low score here invariably accompanies a low overall satisfaction score.

The figures for licensing processing are slightly better than last year's 96.8%, with 97.5% of taxi driver renewals completed within 5 working days of having a full application. This is the same as in 2022/23. The number of vehicles suspended is lower than in the last 3 years at 54, compared to 70, 84 and 59 respectively. As members will see from the details in the appendix, much of this is driven by a single fleet. Members should also note that the testing regime does vary to some extent between partners. Failure rates may reflect the current economic climate, with cost-of-living pressures continuing to impact on members of the trade. However, members should remember that the safety of the travelling public is paramount in their role as the licensing authority.

Numbers of compliments are down on the previous 2 years, but the ratio to complaints remains good at over 3:1.

Staff sickness is up again at 4.31 days per FTE, compared with 3.07 and

2.93 days in the last 2 years. A significant proportion of this year's sickness is long-term (more than 28 days,) and relates to a very small number of officers who have had to deal with life-threatening illness. It is still a significant improvement on 5.2 days from 2021/22, although slightly above the 6-year average including 22/3 (3.6 days.)

Staff satisfaction was at 90.5%, slightly lower than last year and still a good result given the pressures. 63 of our staff cohort responded, which was better than previous years, and over 74% of staff who responded scored the service as 8/10 or better to work for, which shows most staff do like working in the environment we provide. Further work will be done during the year to look at more detailed feedback for the staff.

The proportion of businesses licensed under the 2003 Act (alcohol and entertainment) being alleged to not uphold the 4 licensing objectives is lower in all districts this year compared to last, with the figures at the lower end of what has been reported in previous years. This measure looks at allegations regarding breaches of the objectives, so this is not a proportion undermining the objectives. Although residents may not like what a pub is doing, it is not always the case that their activities contravene what is required. We have 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. Hence, as these businesses sought other activities and uses of their outside spaces to increase revenue, residents living in the vicinity became unhappy with the changes. The data still shows that most premises across the County are well controlled by their operators, with issues arising from a minority.

The figures for the rate of noise complaints per 1000 heads of the population matched the overall low level of nuisance complaints. Wet and cold weather, of which we had plenty last year, leads to closed windows, which generally leads to fewer noise issues being raised. The figures for this measure are the lowest for each district that we have recorded. It continues to suggest that the environment for Worcestershire residents is good.

Overall income was excellent with income from non-partner sources at over £650,000, which represents over 22% of the budget from 2016/17, which we have used for comparison over the years, and over 16% of current net revenue.

Various pressures from salaries and inflation have driven up costs in recent years. Therefore, the cost per head of population is up this year at £6.62 per head of population. As we have said previously, it is difficult to compare our costs with others because of the way the service is delivered, however we are sure spending is comparable or modest compared to similar local authorities that are discharging these functions.

Contact Points

Mark Cox
Technical Services Manager
01562 738060
Mark.cox@worcestersregservices.gov

Background Papers

Appendix A: Activity Report (separate document)
Appendix B: Performance Indicators Table

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Table of PIs 2024/5

Indicator	Reporting period	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4/ Outrun
1. % of service requests where resolution is achieved to customers satisfaction	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	60	58.5	58.6	56.7
2. % of service requests where resolution is achieved to business satisfaction	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	98.3	97.7	96.7	97.1
3. % businesses broadly compliant at first assessment/ inspection	Annually	98.7	Bromsgrove 99.5 Malvern Hills 97.7 Redditch 98.0 Worcester City 99.3 Wychavon 98.1 Wyre Forest 97.4 Worcestershire 98.4	98.3	Bromsgrove 99.2 Malvern Hills 98.0 Redditch 97.7 Worcester City 99.2 Wychavon 98.3 Wyre Forest 97.6 Worcestershire 98.4
4. % of food businesses scoring 0,1 or 2 at 1 st April each year	Annually	1.3	Bromsgrove 0.5 Malvern Hills 2.3 Redditch 2.0 Worcester City 0.7 Wychavon 1.9 Wyre Forest 2.1 Worcestershire 1.6	1.7	Bromsgrove 0.8 Malvern Hills 2.0 Redditch 2.3 Worcester City 0.8 Wychavon 1.7 Wyre Forest 2.4 Worcestershire 1.6
5 % of drivers licence renewal applications issued within 5 working days of receipt of a complete application	6-monthly	NA	97.6%	NA	97.5%
6 % of vehicles found to be defective whilst in service Number of vehicles found to be defective by district and the percentage this represents of the fleet county-wide	6-monthly	NA	27= 1.6% of 1684 vehicles on the road county-wide BDC 1 MHDC 2 RBC 18 WC 6 WDC 1 WFDC 0	NA	54 = 3.3% of 1647 vehicles on the road county-wide BDC 1 MHDC 3 RBC 34 WC 11 WDC 4 WFDC 1

7	% of service requests where customer indicates they feel better equipped to deal with issues themselves in future	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	50	51.9	54.2	53.4
8	Review of register of complaints/compliments	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	5/11	12/26	17/58	22/69
9	Annual staff sickness absence at public sector average or better	Quarterly NB: figure is cumulative	1.13 days per FTE	1.55 days per FTE	2.94 days per FTE	4.31 days per FTE
10	% of staff who enjoy working for WRS	Annually	NA	NA	NA	90.5
11	% of licensed businesses subject to allegations of not upholding the 4 licensing objectives	6-monthly	NA	Bromsgrove 4.2 Malvern Hills 3.5 Redditch 3.0 Worcester City 5.5 Wychavon 2.2 Wyre Forest 5.9 Worcestershire 4.0	NA	Bromsgrove 6.8 Malvern Hills 5.1 Redditch 5.2 Worcester City 6.7 Wychavon 4.3 Wyre Forest 8.3 Worcestershire 6.0
12	Rate of noise complaint per 1000 head of population	6-monthly	NA	Bromsgrove 0.55 Malvern Hills 0.68 Redditch 0.69 Worcester City 0.74 Wychavon 0.60 Wyre Forest 0.79 Worcestershire 0.67	NA	Bromsgrove 1.93 Malvern Hills 1.62 Redditch 1.89 Worcester City 2.03 Wychavon 1.75 Wyre Forest 2.04 Worcestershire 1.89
13	Total income expressed as a % of district base revenue budget (16/17)	6-monthly	NA	£258,989 which is 8.6% as a proportion of the 2016/17 revenue budget figure (£3,017,000)	NA	£668,806, which is 22.17% as a proportion of the 2016/17 revenue budget figure (£3,017,000) and 16.23% of the current revenue budget of £4,119,000
14	Cost of	Annually	NA	NA	NA	Based on outrun cost of

regulatory services per head of population (Calculation will offset income against revenue budget)					£4,064.802 against the County's most recent population estimate of 613680 in 2023, the service cost is: £6.62 per head
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