

Worcestershire
Regulatory Services

Supporting and protecting you

ANNUAL REPORT

2025/26

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 2025 up to the 31st of March 2026 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.

During the year 2025/6, we saw the driest and one of the hottest Summers on record, but although nuisance demand was high, it did not go beyond the levels in 2023/4, which was a moderate year weatherwise. This may suggest a ceiling on levels of nuisance complaint, however, public expectation around how local authority activity could influence the local environment remains high and often exceeds what the law can deliver. Work continued with the development of work to support air quality action plans which progress through relevant member forums at the partners. From these, officer moved onto Contaminated Land strategies, which are now all in place too. The Food Standards Agency continued to take a strong interest in the service and progress on increasing the volume of food visits being undertaken to our lower risk business cohort. This led to further challenge and the partners investing in an additional 3FTE food staff for 2026/7.

Our key strategic priorities, which had been in place for 2-years shaped our tactical approach to the key cross cutting issues identified in the strategic assessment, which were:

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

The team continued to support legitimate businesses and residents, particularly the vulnerable, where we were able and at the same time, we tackled those who broke the law, ignored best practice, or adversely impact the local environment and the ability of others to enjoy it. Central to this approach remained the availability of accurate data and intelligence sharing. Our intelligence and performance unit coordinated and analysed 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
Director of Regulatory Services

James Walton
S151 Officer Bromsgrove DC/ Redditch BC

1. PERFORMANCE, PERFORMANCE-MANAGEMENT & AUDIT

Performance reporting 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 previously agreed with the Board, continue to focus on a range of outputs and outcomes that should give confidence in the service. Previous year's results appear in brackets in the relevant box, with most recent previous year first, 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.

	Measure	Figure	Commentary
1	% of service requests where resolution is achieved to non-business customers satisfaction	57.1% (56.7, 60.4, 59.2, 61.6, 74, 69.5, 63.0. 75.4, 78.9, 78.2, 77.4)	Similar to last year and based on an average score for 6 questions relating to the interaction of the service with non-business customers. 67.7% found their contact with WRS helpful, up from the previous few years at 60.9%, 65.8% and 63.5% respectively. 68.8% found the information and advice provided easy to use, below previous few years figures of 75.6%, 71.7% and / 72% respectively. Some 53.8% felt that the length of time to address their problem was satisfactory, which is lower than the last 3-years 56.3% 57.7% and 54.5%. At 61.2%, those happy with the time for a first response was up on last year's 56.3% but it remained below the 66.9% and 65.1% of the previous 2-years respectively. Finally, some 44% of matters were fully resolved to the satisfaction of the responder, which is up on last year's 38.7% but still leads to a lower overall reported figure. Managers will continue to look at how to improve performance in a number of these areas but the main thing will be trying 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 remain poor with 109 this year compared to 104 last year and 161 and 138 in the previous 2-years. Literally hundreds of requests for responses (over 780,) 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	93.2% , (97.1, 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 saw fewer numbers of returns than previous years, (170 compared to 246, 271 and 352 the previous three years). This is out of 2846 who were asked for a response. Of those who responded, 92% (96.6%, 95% 98.3% for the last 3-years,) felt that their business had been treated fairly and 95.1% (97.5%, 96%, 98.6% for the last 3-years,) of customers felt staff were polite in their dealings with them and informative. Some 98.5% (98.5%, 94.1%, 98.3, 98.7% last 3-years,) of customers found the information and advice we provided easy to understand and 93.8% (97.7%, 93.8%, 97.9% for the last 3-years,) found their interaction with us helpful. 91.1% (94.9%, 91.2%, 96% for the last 3-years,) were happy with the speed of our responses and, of those who made enquiries rather than being visited, 90.4% (96.5%, 92.5%, 96.3% for the last 3-years,) were satisfied with the response. Two years ago, we said we were puzzled by the results, all of which were slightly lower than in previous years but with no obvious reason behind that such as a change to management practice and approach, or the information provided. Last year, figures seemed to return to normality, so we assumed that slightly poorer year was a blip. This suggests this may not be the case, although small returns always risk giving a distorted picture, but managers will look at some of our business interactions to see if things have changed.
3	% Food businesses broadly compliant at first assessment/ inspection	Bromsgrove 98.6% (99.2, 99.4, 99.3, 99.3, 98.4, 97.1.) Malvern Hills 98.3% (98, 98.2, 97.8, 98.4, 98.6, 98.1.) Redditch 97.3% (97.7, 98.2, 97.1, 97.5, 97.6, 95.6.) Worcester City 99.1%	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 wider interaction with lower risk businesses allowed for by the additional resource allocated by the partners

		(99.2, 99.2, 99.0, 98.4, 98.4, 97.5,) Wychavon 98.3% (98.3, 98.2, 97.6, 98.2, 99.2, 98.0,) Wyre Forest 98.3% (97.6, 97.8, 98.5, 98.6, 98.2, 98.1,) Worcestershire 98.4% (98.4, 98.5, 98.3, 98.5, 98.5, 97.5,)	has again had no appreciable impact on the figures, suggesting that these premises too show good compliance levels.
4	% of food businesses scoring 0,1 or 2 at 1 st April each year	Bromsgrove 1.4% (0.8, 0.6, 0.7, 0.7, 1.4, 2.9, 3.6,) Malvern Hills 1.7% (2.0, 1.8, 2.2, 1.6, 1.6, 1.9, 2.8,) Redditch 2.7% (2.3, 1.8, 2.9, 2.5, 2.4, 4.4, 5.1,) Worcester City 0.9% (0.8, 0.8, 1.0, 1.6, 1.6, 2.5, 2.2,) Wychavon 1.7% (1.7, 1.2, 2.4, 1.8, 0.8, 2.0, 3.0,) Wyre Forest 1.7% (2.4, 2.2, 1.5, 1.4, 1.8, 1.9, 2.4,) Worcestershire 1.6% (1.6, 1.5, 1.7, 1.5, 1.5, 2.7, 2.7,)	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	92.8% (97.5, 96.8, 97.5, 97.6, 96.9, 75.2,)	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. Looking back, a slightly below par first half of the year in terms of performance, has led to a slightly lower end of year figure, mainly caused by staffing pressures.
6	% of vehicles found to be defective whilst in service	45 vehicles, 3.1% Of 1467 vehicles on the road county-wide	This number failing is lowest in 5 years (54, 70, 84 and 59 respectively,) so a continuing improvement. Focusing on the percentage is probably better as total number of vehicles can vary slightly year to year. This year's rate is around average looking back and ignoring the Covid-

		(3.3%, 4.2%, 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 proactive enforcement monitoring took place.	affected year. Members should remember 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. This will create financial pressures within the trade, but the safety of the travelling public must remain paramount for the local licensing authority. Given the current financial difficulties for many, this result should probably be seen in a positive light.
7	% of service requests where customer indicates they feel better equipped to deal with issues themselves in future	47.1% (53.4, 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, and reduced return rates.
8	Review of register of complaints and compliments	14 complaints (22, 26, 28, 25, 42, 44, 27, 25, 31, 17, 24, 47,) 33 compliments (69, 121, 116, 134, 161, 163, 128, 138, 103, 51, 57, 36,)	This is our longest running performance indicator in this format, hence the long list of previous year's figures. The large drop in compliments appears directly related to the lack of overall feedback across both types of customers. Many positives were seen if feedback forms that are simply no-longer returned. Complaints arose from a number of areas this year including work on planning and enviro-crime for Redditch and Bromsgrove.
9	Staff sickness absence at public sector average or better	6.05 days per FTE (4.31, 3.07, 2.93, 5.2, 1.9, 4.4, 4.12, 12.45, 5.95, 2.3, 3.9, 7.7, 9.5)	Sickness in the team was higher than its been since before the pandemic. 69.5% of this year's sickness was classed as long-term (absence for a period exceeding 28 days,) and driven by a small number of people dealing with serious health conditions. Short term sickness accounts for under 2-days per FTE.
10	% of staff who are satisfied with working for WRS	96.5% 90.5, 94, 92, 97.5%, 93.5%, 98%, 88%, (NB: Annual figures for 2017/18 and before, 80%, 85%, 77%, 82%)	57 responses were received from the staff cohort, slightly down on last year, but still reasonably good for a team of around 85. 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 73.7% (42/57,) scored this question at 8/10 or higher. Only two of the respondents scored less than 5, both indicating 4/10. 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	<p>Bromsgrove 8.2% (6.8, 9.9, 7.2, 5.9, 5.4, 6.8, 8.7,)</p> <p>Malvern Hills 4.5% (5.1, 5.8, 4.1, 5.1, 3.5, 5.7, 4.8,)</p> <p>Redditch 5.2% (5.2, 8.7 8.1, 9.5, 8.3, 8.5, 7.1)</p> <p>Worcester City 8.3% (6.7, 13.8, 8.5, 10.0, 5.7, 8.8, 8.1,)</p> <p>Wychavon 4.8% (4.3, 6.2, 8.2, 6.3, 3.7, 4.2, 4.0,)</p> <p>Wyre Forest 7.6% (8.3, 9.1, 9.4, 9.1, 5.1, 8.5, 7.0,)</p> <p>Worcestershire 6.4% (6.0, 8.8, 7.6, 7.5, 5.0, 6.8, 6.4,)</p>	<p>Linked to the Crime & Disorder agenda and introduced following discussions with elected members, this measure has been in place over 10 years now, although only eight years results appear in the table. There are some changes for each district, but the overall average for the County is similar to previous years. Only Bromsgrove's figure is above the average compared to its previous figures, so, despite the record-breaking summer heat, where people were having their windows open for longer, perhaps they were less worried by noise from licensed premises. Members are reminded that this measure only records the level of accusations of breaches, and we can confirm that there has not been an increase any kind of formal action. 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 and Trading Standards 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 1.98 (1.93, 2.19, 2.26, 2.25, 2.56, 1.96, 2.7, 2.82, 3.0, 2.7, 3.1)</p> <p>Malvern Hills 1.91 (1.62, 1.91, 1.93, 2.29, 2.45, 2.07, 2.2, 2.39, 3.0, 2.3, 3.9)</p> <p>Redditch 1.94 (1.89, 2.45, 3.09, 3.61, 3.67, 2.97, 3.2, 3.61, 4.1, 3.7, 3.5)</p> <p>Worcester City 2.45 (2.03, 2.86, 3.40, 3.47, 3.1, 2.78, 3.2, 3.13, 4.2, 4.0, 2.9)</p> <p>Wychavon 2.13</p>	<p>Given the rates for all districts last year were reporting their lowest figures since the indicator was introduced, unsurprisingly it is slightly increased this year. However, all reported figures are modest compared to previous years and even Worcester at the highest reported this year is below the average for that district. With record-breaking temperatures, we might have expected a steeper rise, but perhaps people were less concerned than we might have anticipated.</p> <p>Domestic noise represents more than half of the nuisance complaints and, as we have illuded to in Activity Data Reports, noise from dogs and from audio devices remain</p>

		(1.75, 2.04, 2.07, 2.45, 2.08, 2.01, 2.1, 2.46, 2.7, 2.6, 2.5) Wyre Forest 2.44 (2.04, 2.29, 2.75, 2.65, 2.71, 2.37, 2.6, 3.23, 3.4, 3.0, 3.0) Worcestershire 2.17 (1.89, 2.33, 2.57, 2.9, 2.74, 2.35, 2.7, 2.93, 3.4, 3.1, 3.8)	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 business looking at more diverse ways of bringing in revenue can lead to friction with the local community. 1,299 noise cases were received during 2025/2016 (171 more than the previous year), with 795 cases (61%) relating to noise from domestic properties.
13	Total Income	£654,847 which is 21.7% as a proportion of the 2016/17 revenue budget figure (£3,017,000) and 15.4% of current revenue budget (£4,294,000)	This figure does not include the income for work derived from partners like the Homes 4 Ukraine work or other work for the six partners. This is purely money raised from outside of the partnership.
14	Cost of regulatory services per head of population.	Based on outrun cost of £4,227,369 against the County's most recent population estimate of 613680 in 2023, the service cost is: £6.89 per head	This is the amount spent by the partners following the off-setting of cost with income, then divided by the most recent mid-year estimate the County Council 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.

The WRS management team is committed to a high standard of service delivery with the resource available to it. As has often been said, this is sometimes difficult within the legal framework that the service must work in, and sometimes persuasion is the only tool available to officers to achieve a balance between one need and another. Whilst business satisfaction has dipped a little this year, for no obvious reason again, the larger continuing challenge for the service is to improve the perception of non-business customers have of our performance. With so few responses and knowing that those who are dissatisfied will be significantly more likely to reply than those happy with the service, especially as we are all inundated we people asking us to rate their performance, this may be easier said than done. Given how few responses the service received, the team will need to look at alternative means of getting feedback.

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.

Whilst our Uniform IT platform is a little old and clunky, still housed locally not in the cloud, it operates reasonably well across functions and continued refinement ensures our ability to report to Joint Board on our performance measures in an accurate way. Consideration was given to replacement of the system some time ago but, in the current financial climate, this is cost-prohibitive when we have a system in place that does the job, albeit has its limitations. The process of Local Government Reorganisation probably reinforces this decision and, once we have a decision and know how the world will look for the service post-April 2028, it may be worth opening a dialogue with colleagues in the partner authorities. Systems is one of the elements of the Services workstream currently established and looking at LGR so this may lead to those conversations.

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. MHCLG has been looking to encourage the broader use of the system, especially at district council level, and has been funding 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 4 to avoid duplication with the wider and more detailed set of activity data that is provided in the final Activity Data Report for 2025/26, which members will receive at the same meeting where this Annual Report is presented.

There was no engagement with the shared Internal Audit team this year beyond support for 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. We did, however, receive an audit of Licensing by the internal audit team acting on behalf of Wyre Forest DC, who are not part of the shared service. Generally, the results were positive with only 3 minor issues to address, which were picked up by the team.

2.0 SERVICE DELIVERY HIGHLIGHTS

COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Food Safety:

Routine food safety interventions continued as norm during the year, our five new staff from the previous year having undergone competency training and able to carry out food work in premises suitable to their role. We reduced our contractor support to one full time individual. A new EHO joined the team in January

One of the newly created roles was Regulatory Support Officers whose work was focussed on the lower risk end of food registrations where there is a very high turnover of businesses with ongoing data cleansing required.

The Food Standards Agency continued to take an interest in local authority food safety performance not just at WRS, but countrywide. During 25-26 they required us to produce an updated Food Safety Action Plan to reduce outstanding visits by March 2028. They also required us to improve compliance with the Food Law Code of Practice to ensure interventions are carried out within 28 days of due inspection date. This led the service to create two Business Compliance Teams (East working in Bromsgrove, Redditch and Wychavon Districts and West working in Malvern Hills, Worcester and Wyre Forest).

We completed 3542 interventions during the year, of which 2158 were inspections and 1384 information and intelligence gathering activities. 870 new business registrations and 490 food related complaints were received, and 116 health certificates were issued. The inspection programme resulted in only 13 appeals against the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme score given by officers and 83 premises requested a paid-for re-rating visit once any remedial work had been done., an increase of 25% on the previous year. Compliance continued to be very high, with over 90% of premises achieving Food Hygiene Rating System (FHRS) scores for of Level 4-5. Level 3 is considered to demonstrate that premises are broadly compliant with the law, so these premises exceed the statutory requirements. As always officers continued to find poor premises where more formal action is required. Whilst numbers have remained small (66 L0-L2 on FHRS), there continues to be a small upwards trend in premises dropping in their FHRS. Failure to have a documented system, poor cleaning, lack of hot water, lack of training and inadequate pest control were the main reasons where conditions were sufficiently poor to give a low rating.

We continued to work closely with Trading Standards colleagues including on allergen management where compliance continues to be an issue, especially in smaller businesses in the ethnic sectors.

The year also saw the trial take place of The Range in Kidderminster who were fined £300,000 for an infestation of mice. Officers also dealt with an increase in illegally imported or contaminated foods including a large consignment of raw frozen octopus and a range of banned African imports. Worcestershire is also home to the largest UK importer of chicken and chicken products leading to a number of recalls and investigations into food production chains involving multiple countries and local authorities.

Work is ongoing with a high security prison in the Wychavon DC area to secure access for monitoring food safety improvements.

Three salmonella incidents with raw chicken and processed chicken products for Aldi imported from Poland by Westbridge Foods were addressed, requiring liaison with the FSA Incidents Team and several local authorities where affected products were being stored (Malvern Hill DC). The quarter also saw three voluntary closures of food businesses due to poor food hygiene standards.

Your officers provided support to Goodmans Geese (Malvern Hills DC) with an APHA investigation when bird flu restrictions hit, with the associated threat to their essential Christmas trade, worked with an international business in Bromsgrove DC to ensure the integrity of their distressed load process after some consignment issues and supported another local company in exporting new products to Turkey.

The service supported the Victoria Fayre Safety Advisory Group and event in Worcester, with officers monitoring the food stalls.

We have noted an increase in the number of general enquiries about opening new food businesses, and new registrations continue at some 60 per month adding to the team's workload.

CEH: Nuisance and pollution:

This year was a challenging time for your Community Environmental Health Team, with some very complex and difficult cases coinciding with the retirement of one of the Principal Officers who led on noise and pollution issues and some officers requiring extended and unforeseen periods of leave. Recruitment has proven to be very difficult due to the nationally recognised shortage of qualified environmental health officers but remains ongoing. The vacant position of Principal Officer is currently being covered using agency staff.

The team investigated 2,194 service requests in respect of nuisance work, 829 of which related to noise from domestic premises. 26 Abatement Notices were served.

Major works in default were undertaken to resolve a long-standing drainage issue in Barnt Green. An old septic tank system and soakaway at a residential property had failed, giving rise to discharges of sewage across the property and into the road. The remedial works included the installation of a modern packaged sewage treatment plant with consented discharge into the highway drainage system, avoiding the need for a new soakaway which would have been costly and disruptive and prone to future failure.

The summer months saw the Team involved in some very interesting and unusual nuisance investigations. In addition to the usual barking dog complaints which included the submission of an enforcement file for breach of an abatement notice in Worcester, Officers investigated nuisance arising from extensive development works in Bromsgrove, noise nuisance from a car wash in Redditch which has subsequently closed following our involvement, and noise in Bromsgrove in respect of the fast-growing sport of Padel, the sound of which unfortunately is somewhat akin in nature to that of a shooting range. We also received a query in respect of paramotor aviators in Malvern Hills. Not a problem for which we have powers, but we were able to signpost to the appropriate regulatory body

Infection control investigations were undertaken into cases of norovirus and cryptosporidium across the district, and an Officer was deployed to oversee an exhumation. In our infection control role, we are also supporting the invasive mosquito surveillance efforts coordinated by the Medical Entomology and Zoonoses Ecology Team (MEZE) at UKHSA. This project has been crucial in detecting invasive mosquitoes (*Aedes albopictus*/tiger mosquito and *Aedes aegypti*) on seven occasions since 2016. This surveillance is significant given the rising number of Dengue virus cases in Europe, exemplified by the detection of three locally acquired cases in Paris last year, necessitating invasive mosquito control measures. Our role is in running and submitting mosquito traps as part of the surveillance effort. With rising temperatures, we anticipate detections to become more frequent. Early detection and control of these mosquitoes will be increasingly crucial across England to mitigate public health risks associated with mosquito-borne diseases.

CEH: Health and Safety:

Following receipt of a Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 notification, an accident investigation was carried out into a Jewson DIY outlet in Redditch. A Forklift truck had reversed into and run over the right foot of a window fitter from a local company, who was collecting building materials from the branch. He was attended by a paramedic and taken directly to hospital with multiple foot fractures and dislocated toes.

The Parent Company was subsequently successfully prosecuted in Q1, found guilty of offences under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, and on appeal against sentence fined £300,000 with costs to the sum of £11,029.

Sadly, investigations continued into several fatalities notified to the team, with regular liaison and updates being made to the Coroner's Office. Your officers supported the Coroner following an investigation into a fatality at Aldi which involved a scissor lift and undertook a project through tasking whereby swimming pool operators were contacted and provided with advice following a swimming pool fatality earlier in the year.

Safety Advisory Group working continued, including Safety at Sportsgrounds work for Worcestershire County Council, with ongoing engagement with Bromsgrove Sporting, Sixways stadium and Kidderminster Harriers Football club. Worcester Racecourse also has a regulated stand, and the end of season Safety Group meeting was chaired by WRS Lead Officer. As we moved towards the Spring, preparations began for the festival season that generally kicks off the first Bank Holiday weekend in May.

We were also able to provide safety advice in respect of the re-enactment battles of Evesham and Worcester, which sounds somewhat ironic, and in respect of an algal bloom which made an appearance in a Redditch park, presenting a safety hazard. We also assisted the new owners in their preparations for welcoming Rugby back to Sixways and carried out checks at the Sunshine Music Festival.

LICENSING

Licensing General:

The number of queries and applications have remained consistent and followed the usual established pattern, but the implementation of Victoria forms has certainly changed and reduced the number of queries the team receive in respect of Temporary Event notices and Personal Licences. This in turn has allowed the team to focus on streamlining processes in other aspects of licensing mainly taxis to ensure applications are received in full meeting all the requirements of each district policy.

With one member of the team being off long-term sick, others working on Victoria Forms and vacancies the usual pre-summer and pre-winter spike in work driven by applications and queries relating to both Taxi Licensing and the Licensing Act meant the team were stretched making it a challenging year for officers.

The team have worked with all finance teams across the districts to ensure Victoria Forms finances are being redistributed to the districts prior to the roll out of the Taxi forms which will inevitably bring new challenges in the short term but a more efficient and customer friendly journey going forward. In talking to the Taxi trade across all districts this is a much-welcomed introduction which will allow all applicants to fill out their licensing applications and attach all documents needed in one submission rather than send in separate documents and emails.

Licensing officers and colleagues in the community environmental health team have worked together to look at enforcement and compliance in both the NTE (Nighttime economy) and across the extensive programme of events and festivals that take place in the County. By working together and with partners including the police, the BID and district council officers the teams are engaging with event organisers early to ensure they have the correct permissions in place including an up-to-date events management plan if needed. Compliance checks are then carried out to businesses to ensure they are upholding their licensing objectives and/or operating their events safely.

The introduction of the permanent pavement licensing regime last year allowed for more flexible dining experiences for customers and allowed businesses to use their outdoor spaces safely. In light of this a review was undertaken of all current street trading policies across the districts and it was agreed that there needed to be more flexibility for businesses to trade and meet changing consumer habits and demands. These will be rolled out across all the districts in 2026/2027.

A number of new licensing regimes have been highlighted by Central Government but one that came to fruition was the implementation of the new Primate licensing regulations. Each new Policy was reviewed by each licensing committee and implemented ahead of the required implementation in April 2026.

Member Training is always a big feature for officers in early June, and this took place across all districts, with officers providing training to new and established members of the six Licensing committees. A new interactive format was welcomed by members, and this allowed different scenarios to be played out through role play and videos, which allowed a multitude of different questions to be raised by councillors, to get themselves ready for the role at hearings.

Alongside operational and day to day work the team continued to strive for efficiencies, with work continuing to implement new processes to streamline taxi applications with several procurement projects commenced including making the DBS process for taxi drivers and the printing and posting of taxi plates.

Taxis:

A review of CCTV in taxis was discussed at Licensing committees as part of the follow up review to the 2022 Taxi Standards and a consultation by the Department for transport was recently run to make Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) responsible for all taxi and private hire vehicle (PHV) licensing. This consultation was following a white paper proposal to improve passenger safety, increase enforcement efficiency, and establish national minimum standards. A response was submitted on behalf of all district councils by officers after engaging with the Chairs of Licensing for all district councils.

Enforcement work continued across the team including evening work on taxi ranks. The team are now working with other Councils to look at taxi matters in several districts, particularly issues with ranks, over ranking and looking at the increase of area vehicles have given rise to concerns.

Alcohol/ Entertainment and Gambling:

Enforcement work continued across the team including officers investigating suspended premises licences. Intelligence suggests that premises that have not paid their annual fee may also be liable to be non-compliance in other areas of regulatory control, so they are generally worthy of an intervention. And a sharp reminder that unlicensed activity is a crime can result in prompt payment!

Work across teams on preliminary meetings were held for events including summer music festivals, and officers worked with event organisers for a previously controversial bank holiday event in Wychavon. A farm in Bromsgrove was one of several venues which held music events under temporary event notices which were monitored over the spring using both noise monitoring equipment and personal visits by members of the CEH and Licensing teams.

As they do every year, several of the WRS teams supported the City Council with colleagues from across the city with the annual Victorian Christmas Fayre. This is an event that several of the teams get involved in and enjoy working with partners to ensure the event goes off safely for all concerned.

Gambling inspections took place across the districts with no major issues reported. There were good signs of compliance and understanding by all premises. The annual visits have improved standards and knowledge of both the licensing team and the businesses across the County.

Animal-related Activity: The number of Animal licensing inspections have increased over the last two years as officers have ensured interim inspections are being undertaken and several welfare issues have been raised as a result of this proactive approach. There were a number of improvement notices and suspensions served on businesses that did in fact make the necessary improvements to have these lifted and return to having a licence albeit a change to their previous star rating.

The team have noticed a slight decrease in compliance but are working with the communications officer to send out information so that licence holders are aware of the statutory guidelines and requirements for each star rating.

Finally, the West Midlands Safari Park had their licensing visit for its Zoo license where no concerns were raised by the team or the vet present for the visit. The Zoo was pleased with the outcome, and they continue to follow and adhere to policies and guidance as required.

TECHNICAL SERVICES

General Air Quality Work: This continued with officers submitting the 6 Annual Status Reports for all Districts required by the Ministry. Various forms of engagement took place with member forums in a number of the partner councils.

Steering group meetings with key stakeholders were held through the year for Bromsgrove District Council, Worcester City Council and Wyre Forest District Council to progress their Air Quality Action Plans.

The Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy for Worcester City Council was finalised this year. This updated strategy both reviewed and replaced the document from 2001, taking account of changes in the Contaminated Land Statutory Guidance, national policy, council policy, and set out the Council's strategic approach to review and assessment of contaminated land. It was approved in February 2026. This Strategy was the last in a refresh programme for all the District Council's strategies. Work has now commenced on the reprioritisation of sites with the potential for contamination to be present such that any assessment of harm can be taken.

Through the year Officers were often asked to comment on the whole range of planning applications, large and small, including residential developments, commercial, infrastructure projects, solar farms, industrial processes, extensions, change of use, conversion of buildings and any other development where contamination may be a relevant consideration. These work areas often involve officers reviewing complex reports provided in support of planning applications and the discharge of planning condition requests.

Routine Industrial Permitting work including inspection of large industrial processes, foundries and casting through to cement processing and petrol stations continued through the year. The focus of this regime is on activities which, by their very nature are likely to cause pollution unless they are controlled and monitored correctly. Generally, there is good compliance in these areas, but the service has in recent years taken several cases to court following pollution incidents or near misses. Annual returns on processes permitted, risk and activity undertaken were provided to Defra.

Behaviour Change Project: Continuing to build on the findings of the behaviour change survey jointly developed with Worcestershire CC Public Health that was undertaken last year, we have continued to roll out an engagement campaign with local schools, colleagues, community groups and during community events and activities.

Dog related work: It has been a very busy year for this area of the service. We have continued to deliver dog warden, kennelling and rehoming contracts for Birmingham City, Cheltenham Borough, Gloucester City, North Somerset, Tewkesbury Borough and two Welsh authorities, and to support this work officers went out to recruitment to bring in capacity to support the wider work.

Unfortunately, the new contracts brought a significant number of dogs where euthanasia was the only option as the number of dogs exhibiting aggressive behaviour went up dramatically. This was partly due to higher numbers of Pitbull and XL Bully type dogs, both banned breeds, coming into our care. The heightened levels of aggression in some of the stray dogs led to an increased number being euthanised using a dart gun to minimise the risk to wardens, staff at kennels, the vets and the public. Procurement of a specialised vet able to perform such tasks has assisted with service delivery.

As well as the larger bull breeds, we also saw an increase in the number of puppies and dogs with significant welfare support needs. This included dogs that are underweight, and those that suffer with sores, injuries and fur loss. Officers attempted to meet the identified best method of caring for each dog, which sometimes meant looking to alternative forms of boarding outside of our contracted kennels, such as fostering. We have also run a number of publicity campaigns aimed at education and support as well as specific ones aimed at identifying perpetrators.

Overall, stray numbers were at the highest for some years, mainly driven by the new contracts. Whilst we recognise the requirement to euthanise banned breed dogs if unclaimed or not covered by relevant exemption certificates, it is distressing for both the wardens and the staff at our kennelling partners.

ICT team: The team continue to ensure we are engaged with various cyber security awareness activities designed to increase the security and resilience of the computer system we use.

They also worked to enhance service delivery, with these activities including regular updates and patches to our main back-office system, record retention and deletions. The team also contributed to service-wide projects including the Automation Project and introduction of Taxi digital Identity records.

At the beginning of the financial year the team was pivotal in delivering the statutory returns required for the six partners in several areas including the food law returns for the Food Standards Agency.

Later in the year, the team continued its work with the Host's IT service and back-office support company to completely refresh our Database address gazetteer to include regular updates going forward and increased the time our back-office database system is available.

The team have continued to contribute to the service budget with income generation activity in supporting the County Council's Trading Standards team; Bromsgrove and Redditch Planning team; and Tewkesbury Borough Council's Environmental Health and Licensing teams with their respective databases and associated digital documents.

BDC/ RBC SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES

Enviro-crime/ Planning enforcement: We continue to develop the intelligence led approach across these functions, using it to drive the roll out of Overt cameras with associated signage specifically targeting hotspot areas and have been successful in capturing offenders. Some incidents remain under investigation with others leading to fixed penalty notices. The continued focus on these specific areas using our intelligence-led approach is being reviewed every month to ensure continued best use of resources to try and slow down the prolific tipping in these areas. A total of 89 Notices and Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) have been served across the two districts during the year with almost all being paid. This included the use of the newly set FPN for breach of a Community Protection Notice (CPN). Where FPNs have not been paid or are not appropriate, prosecution files are being prepared. With the natural lag of time from commencement of investigation to service of FPNs, CPNs or prosecutions, we are anticipating a continued level of enforcement activity in 2026/27. During the year updates on enforcement activity, introduction of the FPN for Breach of a CPN, introduction of a Parking Contravention Notice (Civil) for littering and revision to the environmental enforcement policy have been delivered through the Committee processes.

OUT OF AREA WORK AND INCOME GENERATION

Although contract work on contaminated land for East Staffordshire District Council came to an end during 2025, we continued to offer contracted support to Gloucester City Council and North Warwickshire Borough Council, as well as the six Worcestershire districts.

We have continued income generation work with Bromsgrove and Redditch Planning, supporting Worcestershire CC Trading Standards, and Tewkesbury Borough Council's Environmental Health and Licensing.

3.0 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

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 an underspend at year end of around £67,000. This was down to excellent work on income generation across the service but particularly in the Technical Services division and with dog related activity where our expertise is recognised in the region but also reflects some of the difficulties with recruiting into parts of the service, especially Community Environmental Health. The draft overrun budget for 2024/5 is included as Appendix 3. The overrun position is subject to final audit, although the budget is at a level that does not require a specific audit of the WRS accounts. Hence, this will be done as part of the overall audit of Bromsgrove District Council's accounts.

From 2016/17 until 2020/21, the main financial operating assumption was a cash standstill budget, with increasing income targets set to balance the budget each year. The pandemic period saw WRS reshape itself and take on further work funded by partners or by the County Council. Post-pandemic, partners have recognised that the service's ability to increase income is more limited and have agreed to fund the recent pay increases and necessary uplifts in pension and national insurance contributions. Members recognised that the income generation progress could not deliver the level of increases expected, especially in the current climate. This situation is unlikely to change in the immediate future with pay increases likely to be at similar levels to recent year's level and prices continuing to increase. The uncertainty created by Local Government Re-organisation may lead to an unwillingness from new potential clients to buy service from us, or it may cause existing customers to look closer to home for solutions as part of the re-organisation process. 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 was the first and only year during WRS's 16-year existence that officers have had to ask members to exercise this ability to draw down from reserves to balance an overspend, and this was only £8,000.

4.0 WORKFORCE PLANNING AND HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

4.1 Structures, Turnover and Training

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. Technical Services also includes the new Planning enforcement and Enviro-crime enforcement added by Bromsgrove and Redditch. 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 with to the six partners, either for practical reasons or because the law (Licensing Act 2003, Gambling Act 2005,) requires it.

Staff turnover remains relatively low, although we are starting to see older members of staff taking flexible retirement and several reducing their hours to allow them to commit to other activities away from the workplace. Where people have to commute, one or two have looked at jobs nearer to home to reduce this pressure, which is relatively low due to our flexible working policy. We have not seen any further losses to better paid roles with national public bodies, but as we have said in previous years, the fact is that WRS continues to provide a solid platform for professional development shows that we retain our reputation for excellence. Previous new recruits have settled in, and their diverse backgrounds have brought a new dynamic, whilst the new cohort of food officers recruited last year are now making a meaningful contribution to the work programme. The further expansion of food capacity within Community Environmental Health has meant re-arranging the teams into two commercial units and one on Nuisances and other Environmental matters, to ensure the correct level of support and to hopefully demonstrate continued improvements in food performance.

We do need to recognise the risks that our aging workforce presents and to start to look at how we bring new blood into the service. The absence of apprentice type training routes has hampered this for Environmental Health, but we are now seeing the development of such courses which would allow the service to access levy funding for the training if we can establish dedicated training posts on the establishment. This is something we need to actively address in the coming years, particularly if we can utilise learning establishments in the wider area.

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.

4.2 Staff Sickness

During 2024/5 staff sickness reached 6.05 days per FTE, the highest it has been since before the pandemic. Almost 70% of this year's sick days were classed as long term (absence for a period exceeding 28 days,) and are down to a small number of staff members with serious health conditions. One of those officers has now left the organisation and another will be returning to work shortly on phased return following a battle with leukaemia. We hope to see a significant improvement next year, and it should be noted that short term sickness accounts for less than 2-days per FTE, which may be regarded as good for an aging workforce likely to be susceptible to a range of health conditions seen in older adults.

5.0 ACCOMMODATION

WRS remains located at Wyre Forest House, Finepoint Way, Kidderminster, with flexible and mobile working generally the norm, and 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 continue to 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.

6.0 BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION (SERVICE DELIVERY OPERATING MODEL)

The Intelligence Operating Model is now the way we deliver most of our activities. The pressures of the Food Standards Agency mean we will be more limited in how we apply this to this function, but it will still have a part to play, and intelligence practices will still be important in identifying the detail behind the ownership of some of our more opaque outlets. 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 revised Strategic Assessment that will help inform delivery until 2028 now, recommended that the focus of activity should be around the following tactical priorities:

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

A Team Manager will take responsibility for each one, ensuring that work is done across the three teams that can contribute to related outcomes. These three are sufficient to capture project and business as usual activities including environmental permitting, air quality, contaminated land, food law enforcement away from the NTE, and others.

Other intelligence products review our data and intelligence 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.

7.0 RISK MANAGEMENT

WRS continues to manage its approach to risk and business continuity. 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,

Risk Management becomes must be considered as part of our management process so that, where appropriate; risks are avoided, reduced, transferred, or retained and managed. The WRS risk register was developed so it could be integrated with the partners' individual risk registers. It is maintained and reviewed periodically, with the current version attached at Appendix 2. This was reviewed ahead of the creation of the 2026/7 service plan. Many of the generic risks and mitigation 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 is seen as the most prevalent risk currently 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. Team Managers continue to work on tailoring business continuity plans to meet the needs of their diverse service areas. Understanding what functions or activities need to be restored quickly is key to this, followed by exercising plans to ensure everyone understands what needs to be done and where to find what is necessary to continue with activity.

The return to a more traditional approach to food law enforcement and the inspection at low-risk premises currently favoured by the Food Standards Agency has led to the service 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 occurred ahead of schedule in October last year, and it is clear from correspondence with Chief Executives that the expectations around compliance with statutory Code will continue, extending next year to include the food standards work undertaken by the County Council's Trading Standards team. It should be noted that there has always been a line in the register relating to the behaviour of government departments and arms-length bodies and policy change but give the Agency's approach, they now merit separate mention.

Concerns remain around public expectation of 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.

Finally, a line was added last year relating to local government re-organisation. Whilst this is not relevant looking backwards, it is to the services and the partner's future. With the bids having been submitted and knowing that the future is likely to be either slotting into a unitary county arrangement or remaining a shared service alongside Public Health in a 2-council shared service gives some certainty. We await the Ministerial decision due during the Summer.

8.0 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

WRS operates in line 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. The professional bodies for regulators like the Association of Chief Trading Standards Officers are trying support the leaders of our regulatory services to encourage diversity. This is something that we will take on board at WRS and do our best to move forward in an inclusive way.

9.0 THE NEXT STEPS

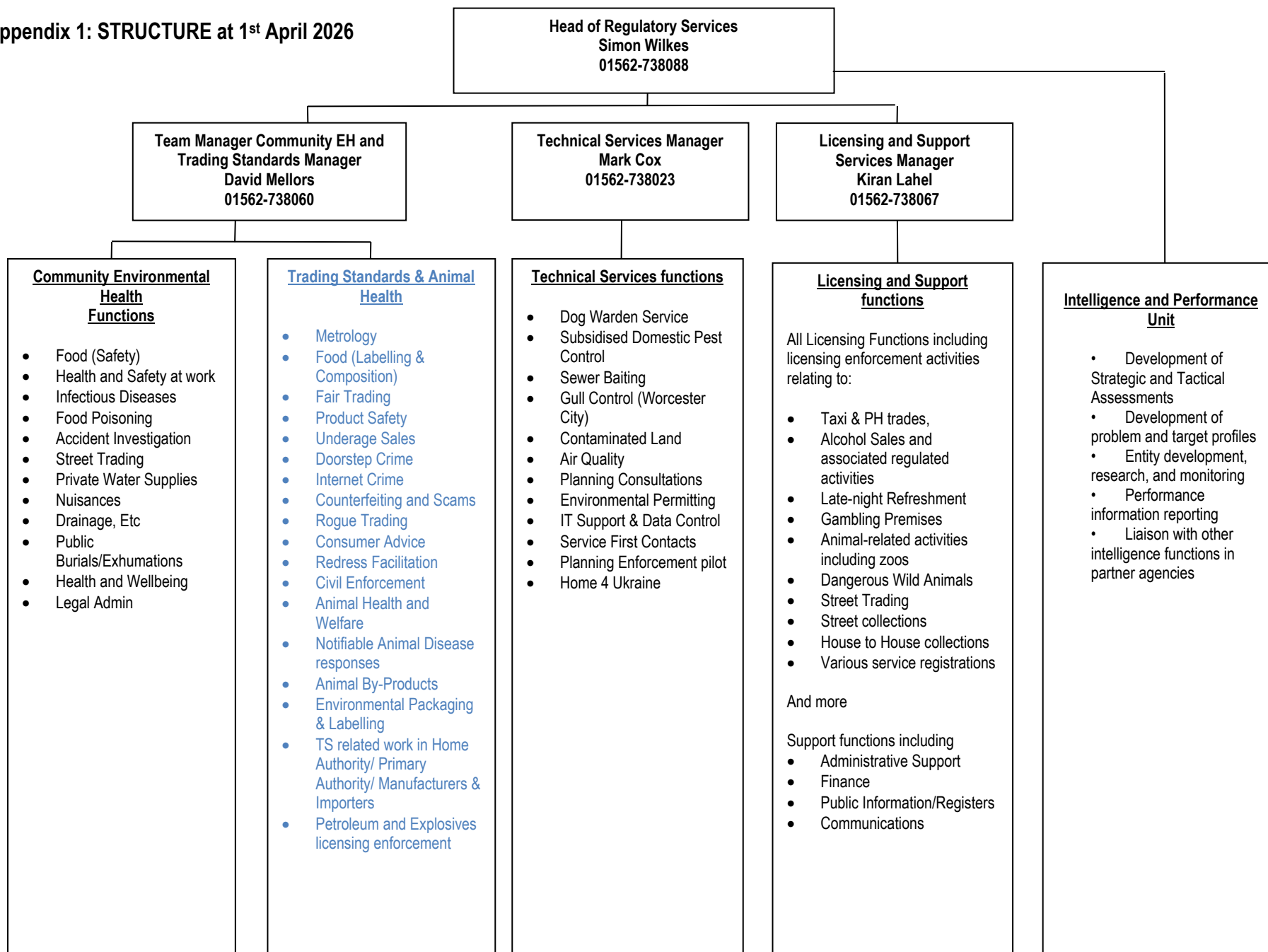
The pandemic is behind us, and we are now back onto a business-as-usual footing. Local government re-organisation creates a question mark for the service and its staff, but the bid documents give two clear options which possibly may have a more limited impact on WRS staff compared with their other district colleagues. There is a risk that the changes will create threats to our income generation activities if new authorities create economies of scale like our own, but these are unlikely to emerge before the process of re-organisation is completed in 2028. In the meantime, our work needs to continue so we will:

- Continue to deliver the WRS Business Plan and our annual operational service plans,
- Maintain existing income streams,
- 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.
- Support partners with the preparation of business cases for LGR.

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 2026



Appendix 2 – WRS Risk Register 2026/7

Risk Description	Consequences	When is this likely to happen	Current Position			Control measures
			Likelihood	Impact	Matrix RAG Status	
Loss of Data through IT failures or Cyber Incident	Disruption to Service Provision. Inability to produce records and data.	On-going	Low	High	Amber	Cyber-attacks are a growing threat for all public bodies. Wyre Forest ICT has effective processes and business continuity plans in place. WFDC has upgraded relevant systems including Windows and Office 365, and is looking to increase security with further additions, which the service will pay for. Cyber security training is delivered regularly and risks identified are tackled.
Issues with the WRS database system	Impact on work planning. Self-help may not enable savings required	On-going	Low	High	Amber	Idox Uniform is an old system but, it provides the necessary functionality and has been capable of integrating with Victoria Forms to provide a sound on-line payment platform that updates the back-office without additional inputting. Bromsgrove & Redditch's additional functions have been integrated into the system so, it does have some flexibility for deployment directly to new enforcement functions. Complexities might arise with potential new service areas not currently catered for within the database, where existing partner databases may need to be maintained in addition.
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/Red	Whilst the pandemic showed that we were well prepared for the need to maximise working from home and touchdown stations remain available in partner council locations, WRS Managers continue to build their contingency plans in the event of a prolonged IT failure or cyber-attack that will allow services to be maintained. This is the greatest risk facing local authorities currently and is one we all continue to move forward with.

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	<p>Whilst the service was able to broaden its activities during the pandemic, engaging people with no formal background to cover roles, it also helped us to better understand the limited availability of competent and qualified officer capacity. This has been re-enforced by recent difficulties in recruiting, particularly into traditional Environmental Health roles. These pressures will only be resolved in the longer term by local and central government investing in additional capacity and additional training to bring more people into the regulatory professions.</p> <p>Demand has increased over the years as we have taken on contracts, effectively operating as a centre of excellence for certain activities. This does however mean that, whilst we have good resource of our own, in event of an issue, there are limited places where we could ask for help. Our service is better resourced and qualified than would be possible if we didn't provide such services for income. Which balances this. 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. Maintenance of training budgets has been essential in holding onto our competitive edge for income generation.</p> <p>Regular inventory and maintenance of equipment is undertaken. In the future, budget for replacement kit may be an issue but would be a relatively small amount for partners to share. For example, we know our provider of noise monitoring equipment from Germany no longer makes the equipment we use and, while we can get it repaired by a UK-provider, longer term new forms of kit will need to be assessed to replace the traditional "Matrons."</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	There have been significant increases in numbers of stray dogs, dog disease, breed and behavioural complexities and supplier contracts are restricted by distance. Retendering for conventional contracts in kennelling and support services remains difficult and consideration may be given to creating our own kennel capacity. Contractual obligations provide additional pressure. The current kennelling contracts are to be extended until 2028.
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. Roll out of reporting by managers has yet to be finalised and training provided. HR capacity remains pressured and there are some frustrations around expectations that are being addressed. We need to improve communication with our hosts to ensure the needs of the shared service do not get missed during any significant changes to systems or processes. This has been flagged to the new CEO.
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	The 2016 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 our organisation minimises overheads and focuses resource at the front line. The growth strategy has generated income to support partners, but there are limits to this without additional capacity being added to the system. Historically, invest to save capacity has paid for itself within a relatively short period of time. The impending re-organisation may see significant changes to the way in which external partners require our services, which needs to be considered one we know the decision on structures from 2028 onwards.

<p>Robust arrangements in place in relation to obtaining legal advice and monitoring legislative changes.</p>	<p>Loss of cases is costly and damages reputation.</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>Low</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Green</p>	<p>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 for Environmental Health in particular, and new emergent issues can leave the law at a disadvantage or not being addressed without the significant cost of establishing case law. Membership of, and attendance of Officer Technical Groups outside the County does assist with communication of emergent issues, solutions and case results.</p>
<p>Service provision complies with Government requirements, New performance regimes are introduced that the service is not staffed to address</p>	<p>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 frameworks in areas outside of food law more likely. NB: Food Standards Agency is addressed below.</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>Low</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>Amber</p>	<p>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's engagement with the Food Standards Agency in recent years has led to a significant increase in investment in relation to food law activity, to bring the service into line more with the Food Law Code of Practice. This has meant bringing back a more traditional approach to these activities rather than the innovative intelligence-led approach being previously used, which of itself did not appear to generate significant risk. 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>
<p>Compliance with Food Code of Practice</p>	<p>Adverse comments following audits. FSA, can seek ministerial direction</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>Amber/ Red</p>	<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</p>

	to make LAs comply with its Code of Practice					<p>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. Papers have been submitted to the Board twice in recent years alerting members to the challenges faced to the innovative approach that the service has been taking.</p> <p>The partners made a significant investment in new resources to address many of the Agency's concerns at the end of 2023/4 and this has been fruitful in terms of improved performance, but the Agency is now insistent on full alignment with its Code, so further investment is planned. This has necessitated a re-design of operations within the Community Environmental Health division, with the creation of geographical teams for the delivery of food and other commercial functions, and a separate environmental enforcement team that will operate across the County.</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. Whilst this is not an issue currently, income may become harder to pick up as the re-organisation process gathers momentum.
Local government Re-organisation	Ensuring the statutory regulatory functions are accommodated in any new unitary arrangements to meet	On-going	High	Medium/Low	Green/Amber	There is little for officers to do before any decisions on final structures and timetable are made. The structuring of the shared service means that

	the requirements of the new structure					integration of these elements into one authority would be relatively straight-forward should the decision be to establish a unitary county model. The alternative two-unitary model clearly indicates a preference for the retention of the shared service alongside a shared County-wide Public Health service. Whilst there would need to be conversations on how governance for these shared services might sit and, for regulation, what functions would remain/ be added, there does appear to be some certainty for officers looking forward.
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Appendix 3: Detailed out-turn for Regulatory Services 2025/26

			Revised Full Year Budget 25-26	Committed Expenditure Apr - Mar 26	Variance
Direct Expenditure			£	£	£
Employees					
	Salary		4,440	3,998	-441
	Agency Staff		0	527	527
	Employee Insurance		21	21	0
	Sub-Total - Employees		4,461	4,547	86
Premises					
	Rent / Hire of Premise		82	77	-5
	Cleaning		1	0	0
	Utilities		0	0	0
	Sub-Total - Premises		82	77	-5
Transport					
	Vehicle Hire		13	5	-8
	Vehicle Fuel		8	7	-1
	Road Fund Tax		1	0	-1

	Vehicle Insurance		5	5	0
	Vehicle Maintenance		3	4	1
	Car Allowances		53	41	-12
	Sub-Total - Transport		83	63	-20
	Supplies and Services				
	Furniture & Equipment		46	55	9
	Clothes, uniforms and laundry		2	3	1
	Printing & Photocopying		17	9	-8
	Postage		11	15	4
	ICT		99	133	34
	Telephones		40	17	-23
	Training & Seminars		33	20	-13
	Insurance		16	7	-9
	Third Party Payments		209	205	-5
	Sub-Total - Supplies & Service		474	464	-10
	Contractors				
	Dog Warden		121	421	300
	Pest Control		78	83	5

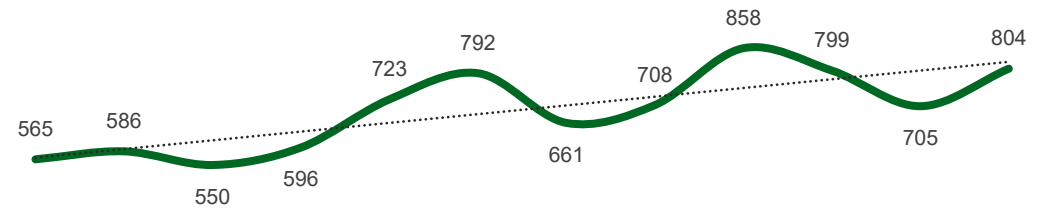
	Taxi / Alcohol / & Other Licensing	52	40	-12
	Other contractors/consultants	3	22	20
	Water Safety	5	7	2
	Food Safety	0	0	0
	Environmental Protection	18	96	78
	Grants / Subscriptions	13	17	5
	Advertising, Publicity and Promotion	6	8	3
	Sub-Total	295	695	399
	Income			
	Training Courses / Bereavement / Works in Default / Sewer Baiting etc	-1,101	-1,617	-517
	Sub-Total	-1,101	-1,617	-517
	Overall Total	4,294	4,228	-67

Appendix 4: District Council Summaries

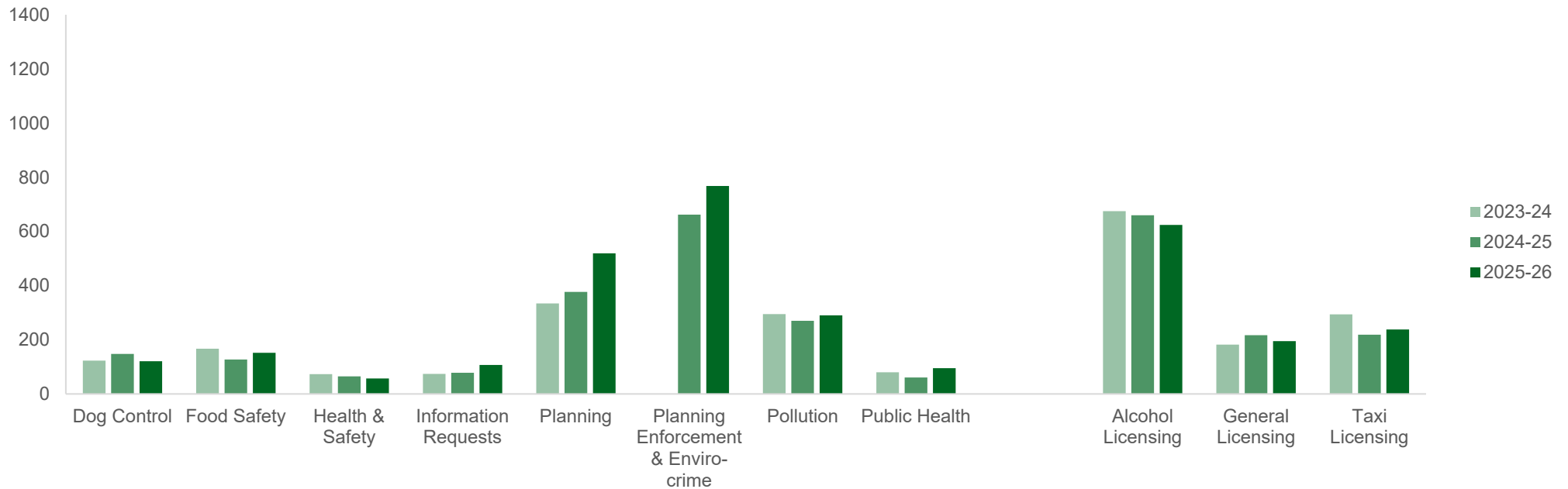
The data on this page outlines the number of Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications) received by WRS where the subject or enquirer were in the Bromsgrove district.

Note: The chart below provides a breakdown of cases by the primary functions undertaken by the service and the Y axis has been standardised to enable comparisons with other districts. The recent increase in cases can be attributed to the additional functions (enviro-crime and planning enforcement) now being delivered by the service.

Complaints, Enquiries, Applications, and Notifications



Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2023-24				2024-25				2025-26			

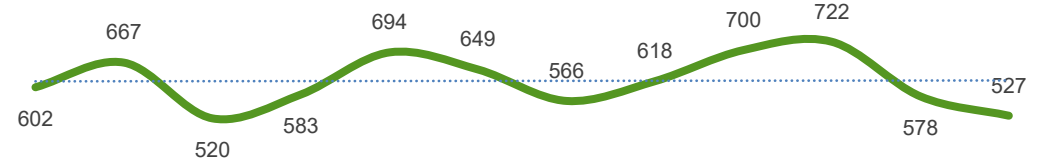


Appendix 5: District Council Summaries

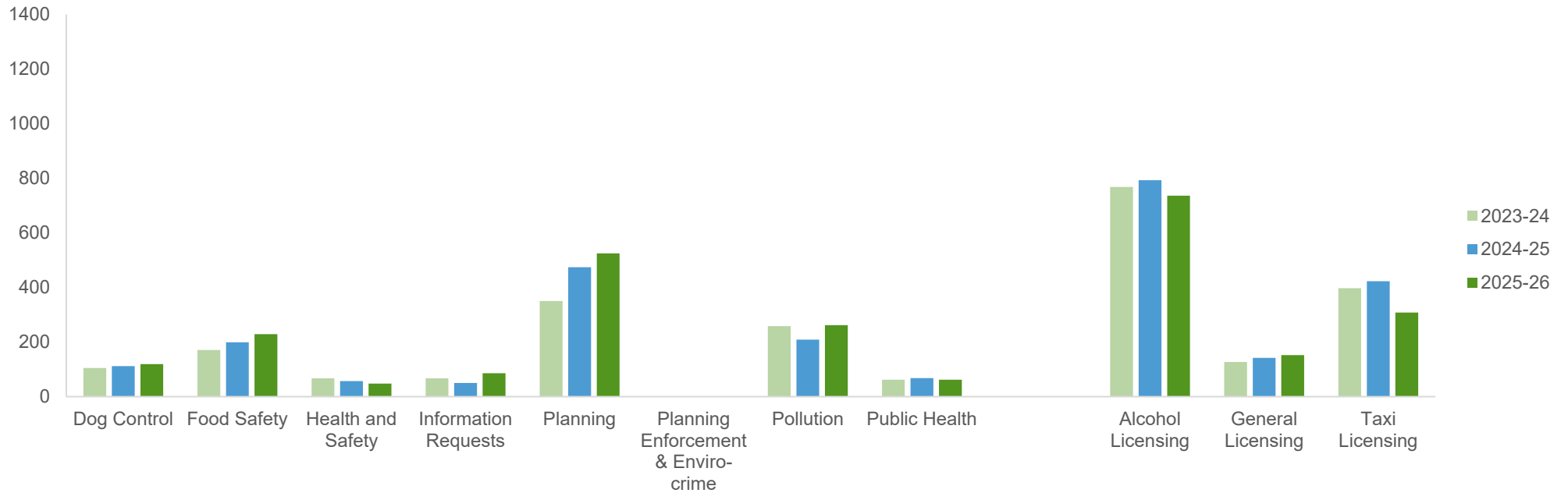
The data on this page outlines the number of Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications) received by WRS where the subject or enquirer were located in the Malvern Hills district.

Note: The chart below provides a breakdown of cases by the primary functions undertaken by the service and the Y axis has been standardised to enable comparisons with other districts.

Complaints, Enquiries, Applications, and Notifications



Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2023-24				2024-25				2025-26			

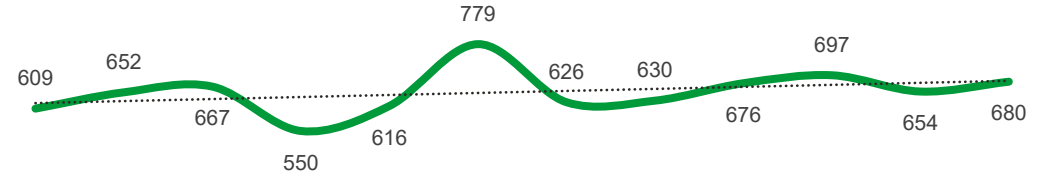


Appendix 5: District Council Summaries

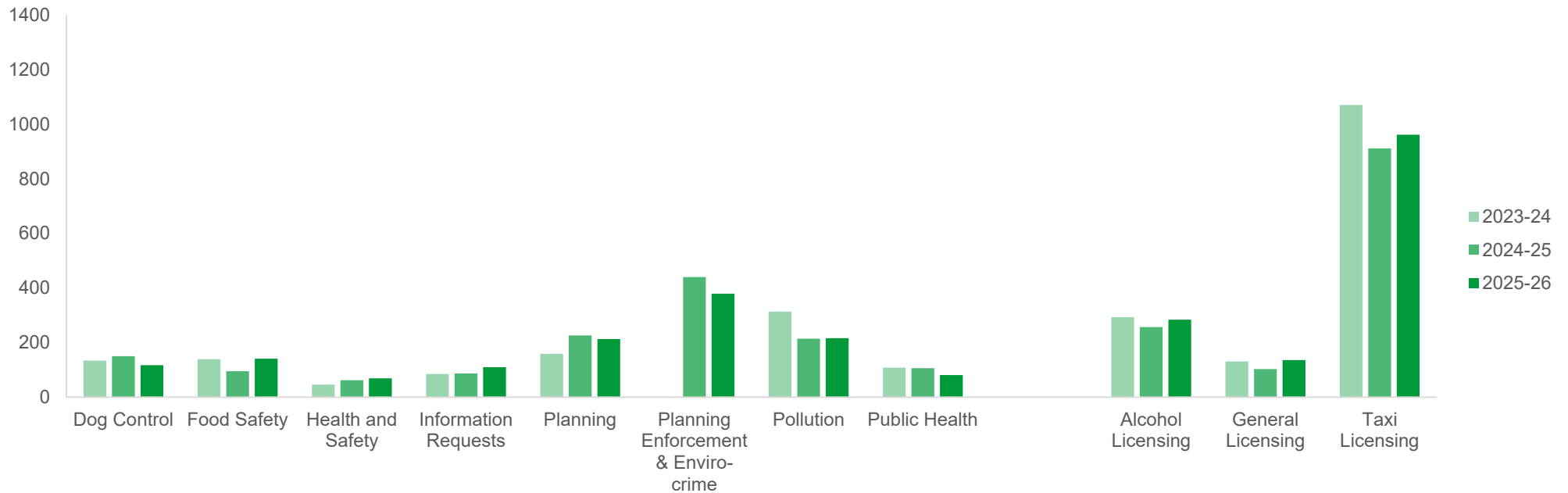
The data on this page outlines the number of Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications) received by WRS where the subject or enquirer were located in the Redditch district.

Note: The chart below provides a breakdown of cases by the primary functions undertaken by the service and the Y axis has been standardised to enable comparisons with other districts. The recent increase in cases can be attributed to the additional functions (enviro-crime and planning enforcement) now being delivered by the service.

Complaints, Enquiries, Applications, and Notifications



Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2023-24				2024-25				2025-26			

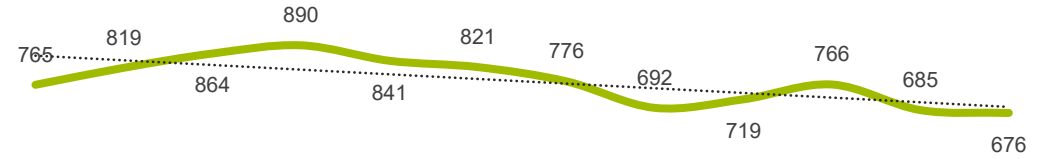


Appendix 5: District Council Summaries

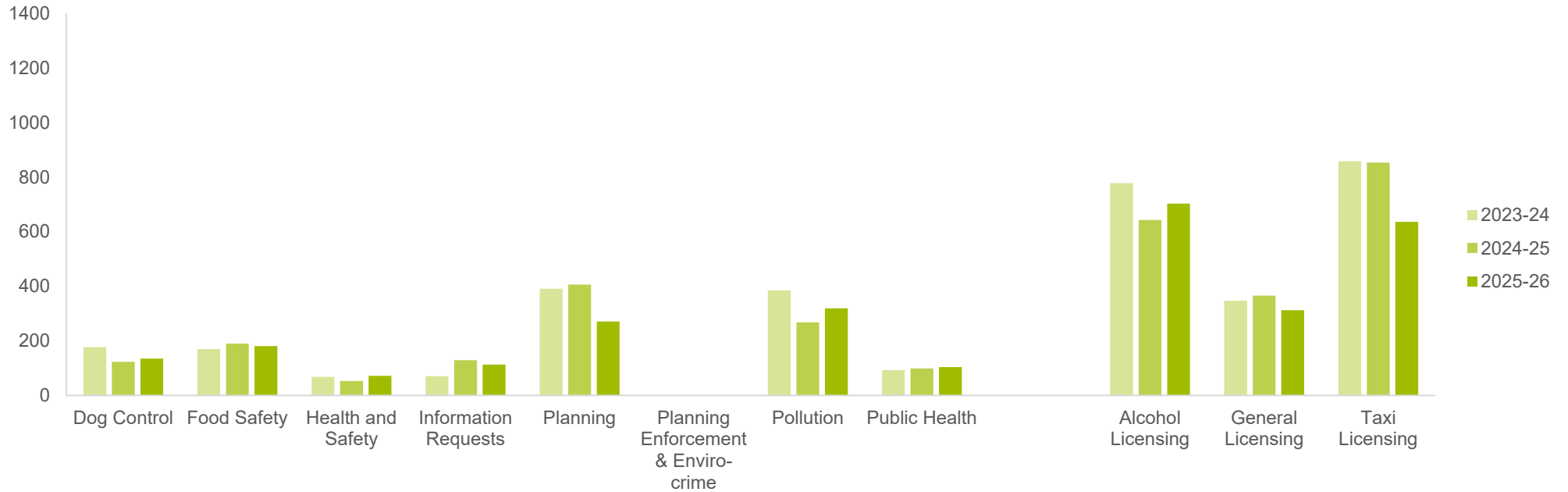
The data on this page outlines the number of Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications) received by WRS where the subject or enquirer were located in the Worcester City district.

Note: The chart below provides a breakdown of cases by the primary functions undertaken by the service and the Y axis has been standardised to enable comparisons with other districts.

Complaints, Enquiries, Applications, and Notifications



Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2023-24				2024-25				2025-26			

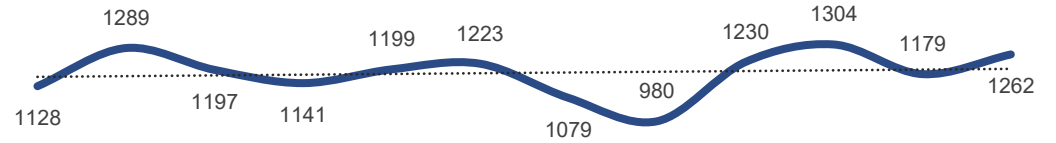


Appendix 5: District Council Summaries

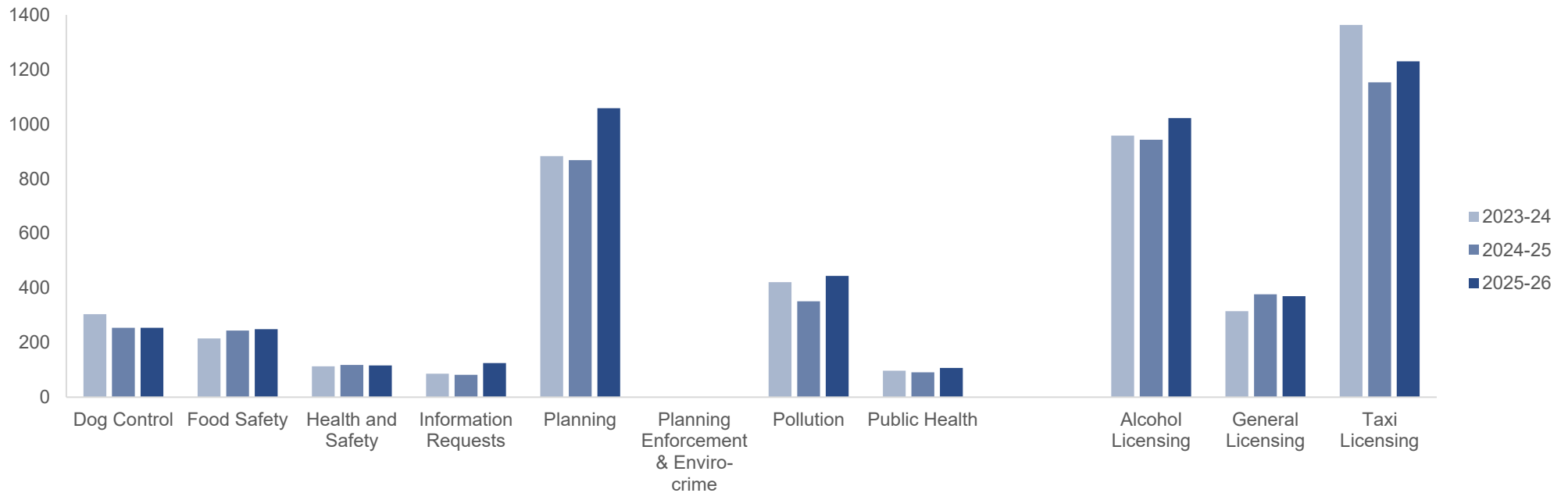
The data on this page outlines the number of Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications) received by WRS where the subject or enquirer were located in the Wychavon district.

Note: The chart below provides a breakdown of cases by the primary functions undertaken by the service and the Y axis has been standardised to enable comparisons with other districts.

Complaints, Enquiries, Applications, and Notifications



Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2023-24				2024-25				2025-26			

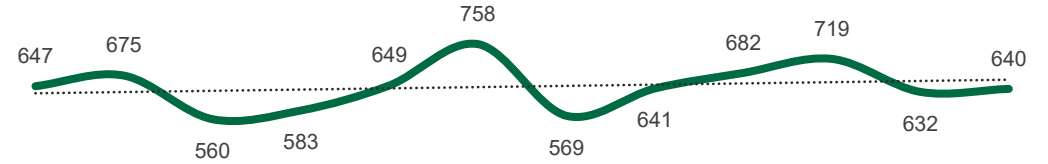


Appendix 5: District Council Summaries

The data on this page outlines the number of Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications) received by WRS where the subject or enquirer were located in the Wyre Forest district.

Note: The chart below provides a breakdown of cases by the primary functions undertaken by the service and the Y axis has been standardised to enable comparisons with other districts.

Complaints, Enquiries, Applications, and Notificaitons



Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2023-24				2024-25				2025-26			

