

REPORT TO STRONG COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE

18th November 2021

PUBLIC PROTECTION 2020/21 PERFORMANCE REPORT

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In 2015 Cabinet requested that Strong Communities Select Committee receive six monthly performance reports on Public Protection services. Members wished to review the impact on performance of budget reductions implemented since April 2014. For the last few years Public Protection performance has been brought to this Committee for scrutiny annually, as previously agreed.
- 1.2 The Public Protection division comprises four distinct teams -
- (i) Environmental Health, Commercial
 - (ii) Environmental Health, Public Health
 - (iii) Licensing
 - (iv) Trading Standards & Animal Health

2. PURPOSE

- 2.1 The purpose of Public Protection services can be summarised as follows –
- a. Protect people from harm and promote health improvement.
 - b. Promote a fair and just trading environment for the public and businesses.
 - c. Improve the local environment to positively influence quality of life and promote sustainability.
 - d. Ensure the safety and quality of the food chain to minimise risk to human and animal health.

2.2 These four outcomes contribute to Wales' seven well-being goals. They directly help achieve a more prosperous, resilient, healthier and more equal county. It also resonates with this Council's Corporate Business Plan 2017/22, approved in February 2018, which sets out our priorities under the current administration to 2022.

3. RESOURCES

3.1 Staff resource

(i) Environmental Health – Commercial:-

- 5 Environmental Health Officers (1 FTE has been seconded to TTP since Sept 20), 4.8 FTE's (Full Time Equivalents)
- 2 Commercial Services Officers, 1.6 FTE's
- 1 Systems Administrator, 1 FTE

(ii) Environmental Health – Public Health:-

- 5 Environmental Health Officers, 5 FTE's
- 2 Enforcement Officers, 1.6 FTE's

(iii) Licensing:-

- 5 Licensing Officers, 4 FTE's

(iv) Trading Standards & Animal Health:-

- 3 Trading Standards Officers, 3 FTE's
- 1 Senior Fair Trading Officer, 1 FTE
- 1 Fair Trading Officer, 1 FTE
- 1 Senior Animal Health Officer, 0.4 FTE (Other 0.6 FTE Regional Co-ordination role funded by WHoTS)
- 3 Animal Health Officers, 2 FTE (1 temporary to 21st December 2021, 1 temporary to 30th September 2023)

(v) Support team:-

- 5 Support Officers, 4.1 FTE's

Above staff resource adds up to a total of 34 staff, 30.1 Full Time Equivalents. The Public Protection division also comprises the Authority's Registrar and Corporate Health & Safety services, but this report covers 1.2 services only, as directed by Members in January 2015.

3.2. Financial resource

In 2020/21, the budget allocation and actual spend is shown below -

<u>SERVICE</u>	Budget	Net Spend
Environmental Health – Commercial	£465,744	£468,786
Environmental Health – General public health	£423,106	£375,089
Trading Standards & Animal Health	£338,640	£337,722
Licensing	£27,732	£15,087
Management & generic costs (eg software)	£115,989	£132,758
Total	£1,371,211	£1,329,442

The budget position for the 2020/21 year was a slight underspend of £41,769. This represents 3% of the total annual budget.

4. PERFORMANCE

4.1 Internal performance monitoring – the four teams within Public Protection each complete an annual Business Service Plan. These outline annual targets, specific projects etc. and progress is reviewed regularly both by the teams themselves and Departmental Management Team.

- 4.2 External reporting – regular returns are made to the Food Standards Agency, Health & Safety Executive, Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, Drinking Water Inspectorate, Welsh Government and other organisations.
- 4.3 In 2020/21 additional performance was monitored in relation to our Track and Trace service, with reports submitted to Welsh Government and Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, (ABUHB).
- 4.4 **2020/21 Performance** (and comparison to previous years)

The right-hand columns summarises performance during the 2020/21 year. The left-hand columns cover the previous 4 years, to enable comparisons to be made.

The following table summarises performance data from the four service teams.

Figure One

<u>Service</u>	<u>2016/17 performance</u>	<u>2017/18 performance</u>	<u>2018/19 Performance</u>	<u>2019/20 Performance</u>	<u>2020/21 Performance</u>
Environmental Health (Commercial)					
Food safety full inspections	502 (100%)	513 (100%)	513 (100%)	561	28 - suspension of programme due to Covid response and businesses closed, (same as all other Welsh LA's)
Other interventions – sampling, verification etc (Not H & S)	483	427	285	336	
Total	985	940	798	897	
Inspection within 28 days of scheduled date	88.4%	87%	88.6%	86% (incomplete programme)	As business closed and inspections suspended due to Covid this figure not collected 20/21

Number of new businesses opened	130	110	151	134	101
Broadly compliant food businesses (high risk)	90.4%	94.3%	93.2%	93.4%	Proactive visits suspended
Broadly compliant food businesses – All	95.2%	97.4%	97.2%	96.9%	As above
Service Requests - food safety	718 (86% within target time) Total SR's 1340	736 Total SR's 1350	456 (85% within 3 working days) Total SR's 1463	720 (85% within 3 working days) Total SR's 1444	453 for food (78% within target) Total SR's 1,792 but major under recording – more likely 2,500
Food Hygiene training	219	257 food handlers trained	208 food handlers trained	123 food handlers training (courses in March cancelled due to Covid)	nil
Communicable Diseases cases dealt with	171 (4 outbreaks and one fatality)	183	210 including Typhoid outbreak	191 (includes one case of Covid before end of March 2020)	3,826 Covid 142 notifiable disease
Health and Safety notifications Notices served	63 accidents, 33 major events 10 Notices served	54 accidents, of which 9 reportable (serious injuries) 24 visits re asbestos also undertaken in the year.	41 accidents notified. 12 serious incidents investigated. 90 events reviewed 12 Notices served (gas and cellar safety)	58 accident notifications 11 serious incidents investigated 25 events reviewed 2 Notices served (gas safety)	Vast amount of proactive and reactive work in relation to Covid regs. Not all work recorded due to time constraints e.g Covid responses to schools and care homes

Environmental Health (General public health)

Housing service requests (SR'S)	138 Total 127 within 3 working days = 92%	153 Total 133 within 3 working days = 86.9%	164 Total 141 within 3 working days = 86%	158 Total 133 within 3 working days = 84.2%	105 Total 70 within 3 working days = 66.7%
Noise	363 Total 318 within 3 working days = 87.6% 188 closed within 3 months = 51.8%	321 Total. 271 within 3 working days = 84.4% 173 closed within 3 mths = 53.9%	374 Total. 318 within 3 working days = 85% 152 closed within 3 mths = 40.6%	317 Total. 258 within 3 working days = 81.4% 181 closed within 3 mths = 57.1%	366 Total. 300 within 3 working days = 82% 199 closed within 3 mths = 54.4%
Statutory nuisance, excluding noise	179 Total 152 within 3 working days = 84.9% 84 closed within 3 months = 46.9%	142 Total. 122 within working 3 days = 85.9% 83 closed within 3 mths = 58.4%	176 Total. 145 within working 3 days = 82.4% 92 closed within 3 mths = 52.3%	154 Total. 127 within working 3 days = 82.5% 86 closed within 3 mths = 55.8%	236 Total. 209 within working 3 days = 88.6% 155 closed within 3 mths = 65.7%
Environmental Protection (fouling, littering, fly tipping etc.)	475 Total 448 within 3 working days = 94.3% 341 closed within 3 months = 71.8%	478 Total. 440 within 3 working days = 92.1% 302 closed within 3 months = 63.2%	484 Total. 446 within 3 working days = 92.1% 421 closed within 3 months = 87%	448 Total. 387 within 3 working days = 86.4% 395 closed within 3 months = 88.2%	705 Total. 651 within 3 working days = 92.3% 534 closed within 3 months = 75.7%
Pest Control	Total 74. 51 within 3 working days = 69%	Total 71. 54 within 3 working days =76%	Total 78. 61 within 3 working days =78.2%	Total 85. 66 within 3 working days =77.6%	Total 113. 95 within 3 working days = 84%

Licensing

Applications dealt with by Licensing	1645 (which includes 423 Temporary Event Notices (TENs) requiring a 24 hour turnaround	1668 which includes 383 TENs requiring a 24 hour turnaround	1813 applications dealt with (up by 145 on the previous year). This includes 425 TENs requiring a 24 hour turnaround (an increase of 42 TENs on the previous year)	1666 applications. This includes 384 TENs requiring a 24 hour turnaround (a decrease of 41 TENs on the previous year due to lead up to Covid lockdown in March and events being cancelled)	1142 applications (down by 524 on the previous year, 31% decline). This is as a direct result of Covid lockdown and restrictions. Only 2 TEN's within these applications and this is as a result of events not being permitted.
Inspections carried out	508 inspections (120 of which were risk rated premises for alcohol, entertainment and late night refreshment)	329 inspections (261 of which were risk rated premises for alcohol, entertainment and late night refreshment)	325 inspections (174 of which were risk rated premises for alcohol, entertainment and late night refreshment)	247 inspections (133 of which were risk rated premises for alcohol, entertainment and late night refreshment). Inspections were down by 78 due to long term sickness	237 inspections (no risk rated premises were included this year, concentrated on Covid advice/enforcement).
Service Requests carried out	879 service requests (816 - 92% - with a 3 day turnaround for first response).	868 service requests (784 - 90% - with a 3 day turnaround for first response – on target).	974 service requests (895 - 92% - with a 3 day turnaround for first response – on target). An increase of 106 service requests from 17/18	821 service requests (739 - 90% - with a 3 day turnaround for first response – on target). A decrease of 153 service requests from 18/19	922 service requests, (846 - 92% - with a 3 day turnaround for first response – on target). An increase of 101 (12%) from 19/20

Trading Standards & Animal Health					
Trading Standards Visits	176	110	126	113	115
Trading Standards Complaints/Advice	428	452	443	547	1018
Citizens Advice Consumer Service	285 Referrals 785 Notifications	302 Referrals 808 Notifications	305 Referrals 863 Notifications	322 Referrals 922 Notifications	341 Referrals 956 Notifications
Animal Health Visits	411	258	219	324	231
Animal Health Complaints/Advice	298	264	242	266	282
Inspections at our: High Risk premises, Upper Medium premises.	No formal programme of inspection this year. Intel approach with focus on safeguarding in particular medical devices.	23% (25/107)	No formal programme of inspection due to other pressures including loss of Feed officer now replaced	No formal programme of inspection due to other pressures.	No formal programme of inspection due to other pressures.
Feed Law Enforcement	118% - 223 Inspections	100% - 235	100% - 212	59% - 144 supplemented by 254 ceased trading visits.	Visits were suspended with database cleansing.
Programmed animal health inspections	No formal programme of inspection this year	10% (30/294)	No formal programme of inspection due to long term sickness.	No formal programme of inspection	No formal programme due to Covid
New Business Visits	52% TS 58% AH	56% TS 59% AH	29% TS (23/80) 66% AH (18/27)	56% TS (32/57) 73% AH (40/55)	61% TS (32/52) 74% AH (52/70)
Animal Welfare Complaints	90.4% within target response time	91.4%	92.6%	63%	74.5%
Vulnerable Scam Reports	9 visits contact with 121 individuals	10 visits contact with 135 individuals	12 visits contact with 149 individuals	10 visits contact with 159 individuals (running total)	0 visits due to Covid 187 individuals (running total)

Other					
Freedom of Information Requests (PP Total)	61	51	66	74	39
Events requiring advice via Safety Advisory Group	102	137	156	105	39, 30 cancelled due to national restrictions

5. **ANALYSIS AND ACTIVITY 2020/21**

A large element of Public Protection Officer time had to respond to Covid-19 work from the time of first lockdown. There were two significant impacts – (1) providing the Track and Trace (T&T) service for the county, involving setting up a 12 hours a day, 7 days a week response, ie. 84 hours a week. There have been fluctuations in the size of the T&T team, with up to 87 staff at its' peak, (mainly externally provided and directly financed by WG), depending on the case numbers and contact tracing guidance from WG. EH Commercial Officers led the T&T response with their capacity being 90% dealing with Covid. (2) Responding to the cases, determining likely sources of the Covid spread. This involved extensive work with care homes, schools and various workplaces. All sections of the Public Protection division provided advice and enforced the WG requirements of the Covid legislation, which changed regularly and had to be communicated to local businesses, event organisers, members of the public, etc.

5.1 **Environmental Health – Commercial – updated pandemic work activity recorded in supplementary report**

5.1.1 **Food safety (food hygiene and food standards)**

Delivery of food hygiene and standards inspection programme – there is 18 months of food safety inspections to catch up on, due to our Covid response work taking precedence, and over 100 unrated businesses in system. Taking into account the rest of this year's due inspections, the total outstanding at end of March 2022 will be 1,370. All Commercial EH Officers were engaged in setting up and working in TTP from May 2020 onwards. Majority of businesses were closed and those that were open given advice and visits as they sought to diversify, for example a rural public house choosing to provide a takeaway service to support their local community.

5.1.2 Business improvement – by giving advice to improve the food hygiene rating score of businesses, which has been recognised to improve both the economy and food safety. In 20/21 the team were unable to carry out advisory, income generating ACCESS visits due to time constraints and dealing with high risk responses.

5.1.3 Responding to complaints

Complaint numbers, due to Covid, trebled or more - working in response to Covid has meant not all work was recorded, eg. various contacts with schools and care homes. Much work was undertaken on Covid regulation interpretation and guidance to local businesses.

5.1.4. Communicable Diseases

Investigation of all cases of statutorily notifiable diseases received. Over 3,800 cases of Covid reported as a notifiable disease, and fewer infectious diseases reported as possibly people were not reporting or going to Doctors with symptoms of food poisoning. In 20/21 the team also liaised with major businesses which normally sit with HSE for enforcement, such as food manufacturers.

5.1.5 Income generation Income-generating consultancy work. Primarily through ACCESS programme and Primary Authority partnerships – not carried out. MCC organised an all Wales response to the Food Law Code of Practice and generated an income as a result of the intensity of work involved.

5.1.6 Health and Safety at Work

(a) Reactive service to ensure protection of employees at work particularly at high risk premises, together with advice on event safety. Proactive work was undertaken to secure certification of accommodation under Covid regulations, which took up a full time Officer's whole capacity during lockdown periods.

(b) Proactive projects – These were replaced by Covid compliance visits, such as supermarkets, and advisory calls, for example concerning legionella checks prior to reopening of businesses.

5.2 Environmental Health – Public Health

5.2.1 Housing

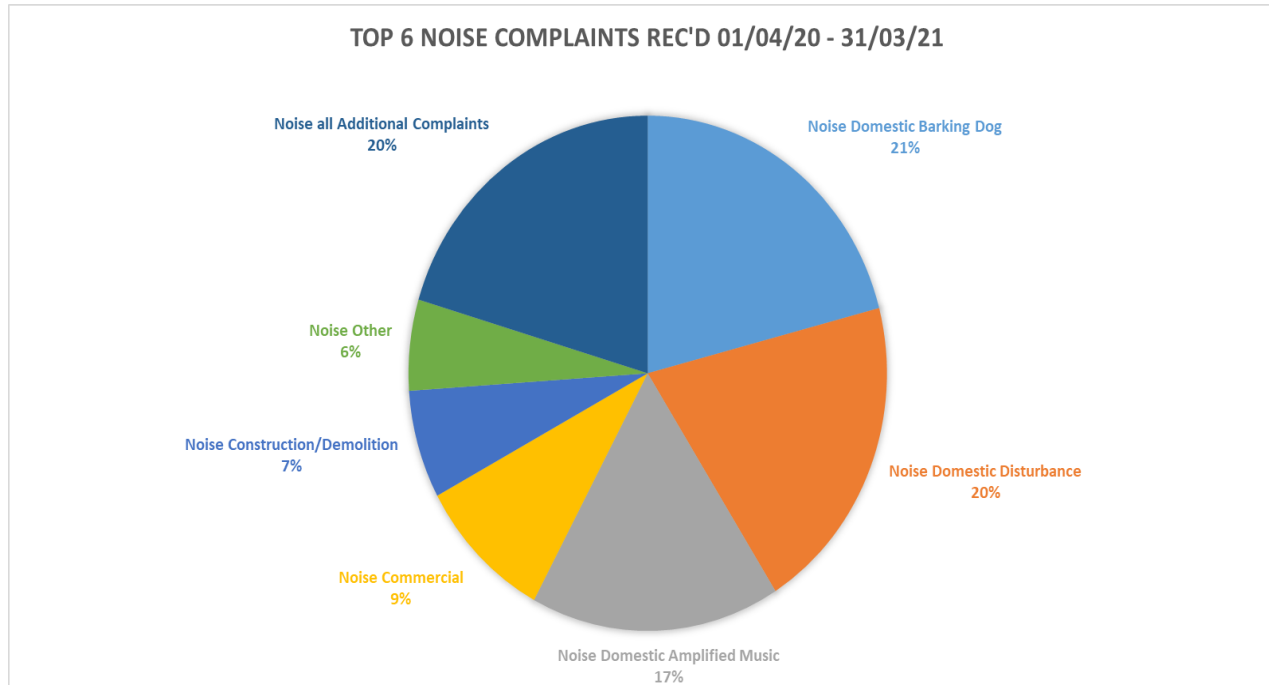
In 20/21 the team continued to provide an effective and early response to complaints and requests for advice in the private rented sector. The period saw a reduction in the number of service requests with 105 compared to 158 enquiries in 19/20, no doubt

influenced by the Covid pandemic. A total of 23 inspections were undertaken when the pandemic rules permitted, with 28 category 1 hazards (most serious) and 61 category 2 hazards identified. Of the total of 89 hazards a substantial number (35) relate to damp, cold and fire safety issues.

In the 23 dwellings inspected, 34 adults and 27 children were exposed to significant hazards. Officers engage with landlords, make clear their responsibilities under the Housing legislation and seek their cooperation to undertake the required works to remove the hazards identified. A range of enforcement actions are available and used where landlords do not cooperate such as the service of Improvement Notices and in the most serious cases Prohibition Orders. By the 31st March 2021, 10 adults and 10 children had been protected by landlords undertaking the required remedial works.

5.2.2 Noise

The 366 noise complaints received amounted to the 2nd highest recorded for the section close to the 374 complaints in 18/19. Complaints of noise from residential properties mainly barking dogs, loud music and domestic disturbance account for 58% of these (213). Noise complaints from commercial type premises and construction sites remain sizeable, especially given the Covid lockdown periods, with 34 and 25 service requests respectively. Officers endeavour to respond and deal with complaints quickly, with 300 responded to within 3 days (82%) and 199 closed within 3 months (54%).



5.2.3 Environmental Protection

Period 20/21 saw a very large increase in the number of complaints with 705 comparable with the previous high of 484 in 18/19. Of these 423 related to fly tipping incidents. The team had to adapt to the pandemic to ensure investigations were undertaken safely. For example, face to face interviews of potential suspects were suspended for much of the period, with formal interview letters being widely used as an alternative. Evidence gathered resulted in 4 fixed penalty notices being issued for fly tipping related offences with 2 not being paid and therefore progressing to prosecution in 21/22.

The team continues to lead, together with colleagues from the Waste and Street Cleaning section, in the sixth year of the **'Give Dog Fouling the Red Card'** scheme which now has 26 participating Town and Community councils. The scheme is about collaboration, maximising resources and raising awareness that dog mess must be bagged / binned. Members continue to report generally good news, although dog fouling hot spot areas continue throughout the county with fouling on play areas and sports pitches especially frustrating.

Members views have helped inform the decision to explore the potential for dog controls (fouling, dogs on leads / exemption areas) in the county to be provided in a Public Spaces Protection Order. Stronger Communities Select endorsed recommendations in a report March 2020 to commence a 3 month public consultation. The consultation was suspended because of the pandemic but progressed 26th July – 26th October 2021, the findings of which will be reported on early 2022.

5.2.4 Private Water Supplies

The team has the responsibility for fulfilling the Council's duty of risk assessing all 'large' and 'small' private water supplies (PWS), where water is intended for human consumption. Improvements are undertaken where necessary to ensure a wholesome and sufficient water supply is provided.

We currently have 119 'small' and 64 'large' supplies, the vast majority of which have received an initial risk assessment. There is an ongoing statutory requirement to risk assess supplies every 5 years and this area of largely proactive work has been highlighted consistently in the last 5+ years in the service plan as an area of significant resource pressure.

Additional resource resulted in some progress in the 2017/19 period, but the lockdown periods in 20/21 meant that this area of work was largely suspended. The current situation reads:

41 of the 64 known large supplies in high risk category = 64%

61 of the 119 known small shared / domestic tenancy supplies in high risk category = 51%

5.2.5 Pest Control

Complaint levels remain very similar with 113 received compared with 85 in 19/20. The majority of these relate to rats (98).

5.2.6 Construction

Engagement with the developers of the A465 dual carriageway scheme and a number of large house building projects continued throughout 20/21. Our interest is to ensure that the contractors do all that can be reasonably expected to control noise, dust and air pollution levels. A substantial work commitment is needed in these areas which is generally not reflected in the Service Request statistics, with successful engagement hopefully resulting in low complaint numbers.

5.2.7 Air Quality

For the first time the team failed to meet the inspections targets for the industrial permitted sites and petroleum certified sites which we have responsibility for from a pollution legislation perspective. Visits suspended during the lockdown periods meant 9 of the 17 industrial permitted sites due (53%) and 8 of the 18 petroleum certified sites (44%) were undertaken. Achieving these visits

and ensuring continuing compliance and liaison with the companies involved, given the circumstances, is testament to the hard work and perseverance of the team.

Monitoring continued of traffic related pollution (nitrogen dioxide) in our 4 major towns and advice given in meetings of the steering groups in the Chepstow and Usk Air Quality Management areas.

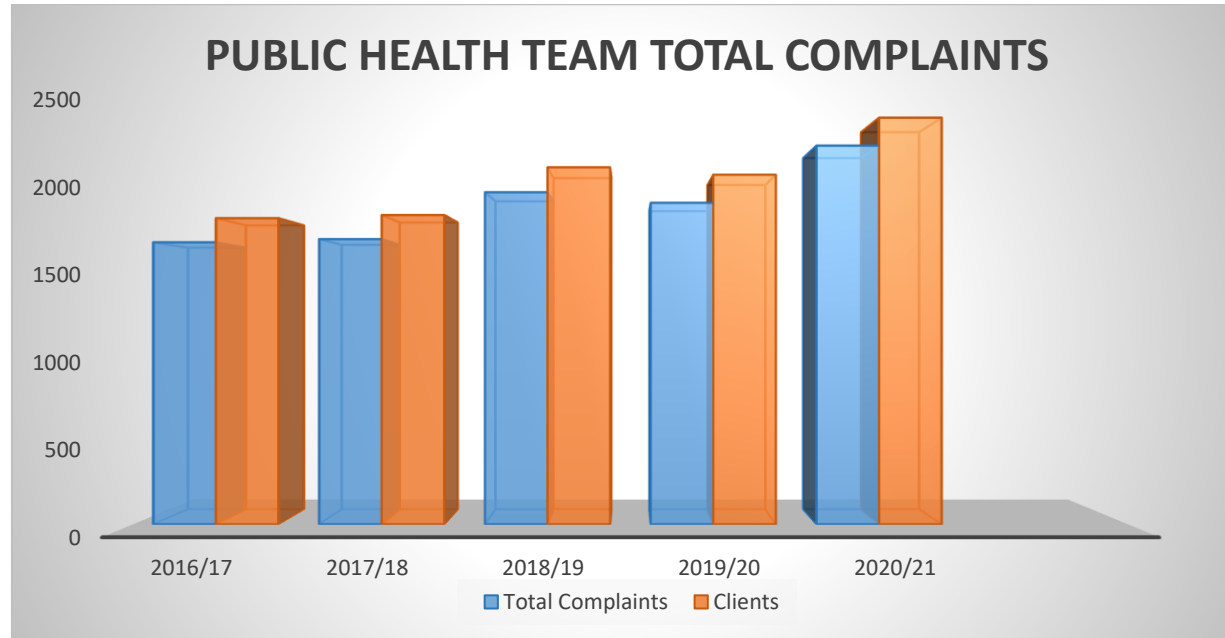
There remains just one location in the County, on Hardwick Hill, Chepstow, where nitrogen dioxide levels in recent years have exceeded the annual objective level of 40ug/m³ set by legislation. There were no exceedances in the county in 2020 (calendar year) with concentrations generally at their lowest recorded levels due to the lockdown periods.

2020 was the 6th year that levels in the Usk Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) were below the nitrogen dioxide objective level and the third year below 36 µg/m³ (which is below 10% of the objective level). Welsh Government have suggested that five years below 10% of the objective level is appropriate to consider revocation of the AQMA.

Our continuous air quality sensors are in use at 4 schools - Usk and St Mary's primary schools, Chepstow and Monmouth Comprehensive schools. The sensors continuously monitor nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide, carbon monoxide, ozone, air temperature, humidity, and pressure. This data can be viewed live via a website and there is scope for this to be an important education tool and help raise awareness of the need for good air quality.

5.2.8 Total Enquiries

Period 20/21 continued the trend of increasing service requests across the range of functions delivered by the team, but with a substantial hike to 2293 received comparable with 1947 in 19/20 (17.7% increase). The trend is best shown as follows:



5.3 Licensing

5.3.1 General

The Licensing team deals with a variety of licences, dealing with pubs, restaurants, off-licences and takeaways, taxis, street trading (e.g. burger vans), street/house to house collections, (e.g. charity collections in the street or bag drops at homes), gambling (e.g. betting shops, racecourse, one armed bandits in pubs/clubs, raffles etc.), scrap metal collectors and sites. The team are also authorised to deal with sex establishments, boats and hypnotism.

922 requests for service were processed by the Licensing between April 2020 – March 2021, up by 76 from the previous year. A breakdown of the 922 requests as shown:-

The majority of the services requests involved giving Covid advice on enforcement and dealing with queries. Licensing were consulted upon and actively involved in the processing of pavement licences in order for the hospitality sector to open up outside, whilst putting in measures to control the spread of Covid. The team assisted the consultation to award urban grants to this sector who suffered financial hardship as a result of restrictions to opening and lockdowns.

The team continued to deal with Licensing Act queries, 239 requests, where licences changed or applications made to adapt to the evolving changes as a result of the pandemic. Taxi/private hire trade also made 225 requests for service.

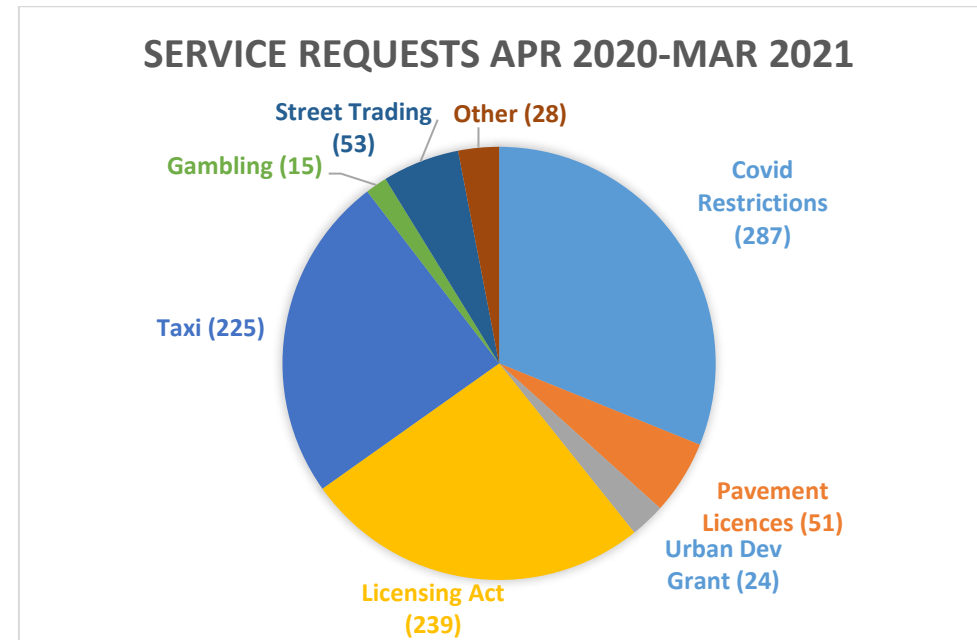
1142 applications were processed in 20/21, (a decrease of 524 for the same period the previous year). This is as a result of events being unable to take place and as such only 2 Temporary Events were made, compared to (on average) Licensing receiving 500+ per year in a normal year.

Some of the work carried out by Licensing during this period included:-

5.3.2 Pubs, Restaurants, Off-licences, Clubs and Takeaways

Night Time Economy and Joint Enforcement

In 2020/21, Covid enforcement measures and advice were at the forefront. 230 (out of a total of 237 inspections for the year) premises received Covid inspections checking compliance. This involved the following:-



Licensing organised two live streaming events for the hospitality sector as a Q&A session due to changes by Welsh Government to deal with the pandemic. These streaming events were to guide them through the opening of their venues which had been in lockdown.

13th July 2020 – Hospitality permitted to open outside only. Licensing actively worked with Highways to process pavement licences to enable the trade to have the footfall whilst still putting in safety measures outside.

3rd August 2020 – Hospitality permitted to re-open inside. Advice and inspections were conducted, focussing on the town centre and busy venues to ensure risk assessment and Covid measures were in place, such as table service, Track and Trace details, no persons permitted at the bar area.

24th September 2020 – Opening times were restricted to alcohol ceasing at 10pm with only off sales permitted. Again advice and enforcement was necessary to ensure compliance.

23rd October 2020 - 9th November 2020 – Lockdown in place with only take out service permitted. Licensing inspected for compliance. There was a short space between 9th November to 20th December where they could open up until 6pm, and then it reverted back to lockdown with only take out permitted up until the end of March 2021.

For every change made by WG Licensing issued a bulletin to every licence holder providing advice.

Licensing was a consultee and assisted the Urban Development Grant team in getting the message to hospitality venues on grants available, and actively took part in the re-opening towns scheme and business forum. The difficulties this sector faced financially was fully recognised.

However, not all complied to such changes imposed by WG and Licensing had to serve 14 improvement notices due to lack of social distancing, not wearing masks indoors, and permitting sales at the bar. All made the necessary changes and the improvement notices were then withdrawn and monitoring of those premises took place. 2 premises received instant fixed penalty notices, where it was witnessed by Licensing Officers, for serving alcohol when not permitted.

5.3.3 Taxis

In 2020/21, the taxi trade were permitted to carry on trading during the pandemic in order to provide a vital service to key workers and other passengers. A policy was introduced regarding the use of screens in vehicles to ensure safety, not only to deal with Covid prevention measures but also to ensure the screens would be safe in the event of accident. Doctors were unable to carry out medicals to assess the fitness of a driver and therefore renewal drivers were permitted to carry out self-certification that no change to health had taken place since their last GP conducted medical. Licensing worked with Torfaen Training to introduce on-line

Safeguarding training and for drivers to carry out their knowledge test as the classroom environment was no longer viable. This on-line training has now continued going forward.

Drivers were unable to get hand sanitation and this was sourced from a brewery and issued out to grateful drivers, noting a national shortage at the time.

All these measures were put in place by Licensing to ensure the continuation of this service and ensure passenger safety was maintained.

5.4 Trading Standards & Animal Health

5.4.1 Feed

The Feed Programme was put on hold with the agreement of the Food Standards Agency for 2020/21 due to the pandemic, with resources reallocated to support Covid advice and enforcement. There was an element of database cleansing that was able to be carried out and feed related advice and complaints were still responded to and dealt with. New members of the animal health team were able to undertake virtual training to build their competence with practical experience now being supported in the current year. The final report following the Feed Audit undertaken in early 2020 is due to be received shortly.

5.4.2 Animal Health

The animal health function continues to be over 90% reactive but has been bolstered by the recruitment of an officer to cover maternity leave who has wide experience. The Trading Standards team leader is strategic lead nationally for animal health matters and continues to be heavily involved in working with WG, to develop and deliver the Partnership Delivery Plan with associated additional funding. This is based on a regional approach and mirrors the footprint of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal. Monmouthshire has approximately 50% of the critical control points and animal related premises within this region, but current capacity, at 1.4 FTE's, limits this opportunity. Additional capacity has been as a result of leading regionally the Animal Health and Feed functions through additional income but remains uncertain. The Local Authority Enforcement Project on Dog Breeding was initially delayed due to Covid but is now improving support for all local authorities across Wales.

The Trading Standards Wales Dog Breeding Project, being led by Monmouthshire, underpins the delivery of some of the actions identified in the Animal Welfare Plan for Wales due to be launched this month. It will challenge illegal dog breeding, offer support to local authority animal health services to respond to assertions of animal cruelty and will allow local authorities some capacity to focus on wider animal health and welfare work. This is another example of local authorities turning policy aspirations into action and delivering much needed support and change.

5.4.3 Fair Trading

We were successful in being selected to work on a funded project by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy – second year pilot testing an enforcement strategy and toolkit for the Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property) (England and Wales) Regulations 2015. This attracted funding of £100k and commenced in July 2020 after being similarly delayed by the pandemic and rolled over into the new financial year. Work continues to identify non-compliant premises with advice and enforcement where necessary, to bring Landlords of non-complying properties up to the minimum standards required.

The Public Health (Minimum Price for Alcohol) (Wales) Act 2018 was implemented on 2 March 2020 just before the first lockdown commenced and minimum unit pricing visits had to be put on hold. It had been requested by WG that all off-licences were visited in the first 3 months to support the implementation of the new 50p per unit minimum requirement. These recommenced recently and will be completed before the end of 2021.

5.4.4 Consumer Protection

A priority for the service has been dealing with a variety of scams and bringing them to the attention of both the public and businesses whenever possible. We are all potential victims and, by reaching out and working alongside adult safeguarding, vulnerable victims can be kept out of overburdened local care systems.

The key focus continues to be working with vulnerable victims through priority referrals and ensuring they are given the advice and assistance required and/or referred as appropriate. During the pandemic though this work has had to be put on hold as visiting often the more vulnerable in society would not have been appropriate.

5.4.5 Weights & Measures

There was a significant increase in the number of new business enquiries during the pandemic from individuals that were looking to new areas of work that required advice.

5.4.6 Product Safety

Following the outbreak of the pandemic we quickly saw a number of problems arise especially in relation to PPE, that suddenly became an area of high demand and in doing so attracted the interest of organised criminality as well as businesses trying to survive. We instigated and managed a recall of non-compliant hand sanitiser that had been distributed to many businesses and organisations, including our own departments.

5.4.7 Income Generation

In 2020/21 saw a drop in feed funding to approximately £11,000 due to the inability to be able to undertake inspection work. Animal Health PDP regional co-ordination and additional project work, Primary Authority and other regional initiatives brought in around £12,000.

5.5 Event Safety Advisory Group

A number of Public Protection staff are involved in Monmouthshire's Event Safety Advisory Group, (ESAG). This is a partnership designed to help organisers run safe and successful events. It is recognised a proactive advisory stance is preferable to reacting to problems after events have occurred. Events held in 20/21 were significantly reduced due to the WG ban on mass gatherings. Only 9 events occurred in the entire 12 months, but advice was sought and provided from all our typical organisers.

6 PERFORMANCE SUMMARY 2020/21 year

- 6.1 Public Protection teams rallied to provide a robust response to the pandemic, both by providing a Track and Trace service and assisting members of the public, other MCC Departments and local businesses in responding to WG restrictions in a safe and responsible manner. A supplementary report highlights specific activities the Division engaged in to seek to reduce the spread of the Covid-19 virus.
- 6.2 Inevitably our traditional Public Protection services – food safety inspections, proactive trading standards and animal health visits, housing inspections, etc. – suffered as a consequence of dealing with this public health priority. Proactive inspections remain some way off being achieved, as a direct consequence of dealing with Covid related matters. These include continual advice and support to our care homes, schools, local businesses and events.
- 6.3 Service request levels across all teams remained high throughout 2020/21 so reactive work was prioritised over our proactive activities.
- 6.4 Figure One illustrates the general increase in requests for service across the teams. The teams all responded well and prioritised higher risk issues, which involved visits to premises when deemed appropriate.
- 6.5 The joint working with Public Health Wales and Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, in response to the pandemic, was excellent and provides opportunities for further collaborative working when services return to more normality.
- 6.6 Members can gain some assurance that performance is in line with other Authorities, including the drop in proactive work, via regular monitoring by the external governing bodies.

7 2021/22 AND BEYOND

- 7.1 It will be some time yet until Public Protection can fully recover from the still current pandemic. There is a significant backlog of proactive inspections needed, eg. 5.1.1. refers to a backlog of 1,370 food safety visits that requires attention. Our interventions to help reduce the spread of Covid-19 will remain our first priority for the remainder of 2021/22. Indeed WG funding, now secured to 30th June 2022, reflects that we will continue with Track and Trace well into 22/23. This inevitably pulls Environmental Health and other staff away from their more routine work.
- 7.2 A budget pressure mandate has been submitted to seek further new recurring funding for Public Protection services for 2022/23 and beyond. More capacity to deal areas of work that have slipped, such as private housing interventions and consumer protection issues, is warranted, also noting the general increase in service demand. Our 2020/23 Business Plans seek to better reflect our longer term vision and future planning. This tallies with the Well Being of Future Generations expectations, with Public Protection services contributing directly to a more prosperous, resilient, healthier and more equal county. Digital solutions are being pursued to help capacity issues.
- 7.3 Collaborative opportunities are being pursued at regional and national level, and this Authority will play a part in developing future service models. Further income generation opportunities will continue to be explored, albeit most new income streams had to be paused in 20/21. The 3 year Dog Breeding Project led by the TS Manager and Animal Health Regional coordinator shows our desire to seek more effective ways of working. The collaborative working with PHW and ABUHB, in response to the pandemic, will be built on in 22/23 to tackle public health priorities together. Protecting vulnerable people engaging in the night-time economy will be a key priority for MCC Licensing working with Gwent Police.
- 7.4 Our services, together with delivering statutory responsibilities, acts on local intelligence and welcomes input from local Councillors, other stakeholders, etc. to improve outcomes for our citizens and local businesses. The services enjoy an excellent reputation, due to the commitment of the Officers, and will continue to contribute to the wider agendas and our core purposes, as provided in 2.1. The profile of our Public Protection services, both locally and nationally, has never been so buoyant, so Officers would like to capitalise on this momentum with future investment across the Division.