



Joint Committee Performance report

July 2019



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All Partner Councils Combined



Business Rates Collection					
	Q1	Jul-19	Q3	Q4	
2019/20	£ 68,526,436	£ 89,400,479			●
Target	£ 67,766,801	£ 88,277,819			●
2018/19	£ 69,705,667	£ 91,260,793			●
Year End Target			£241,368,703		●

Council Tax Collection					
	Q1	Jul-19	Q3	Q4	
2019/20	£125,766,695	£167,135,544			●
Target	£124,472,983	£164,706,442			●
2018/19	£119,257,339	£157,815,455			●
Year End Target			£432,596,541		●

Number of Electronic Forms Received					
	Q1	Jul-19	Q3	Q4	
2019/20	9,375	12,935			●
2018/19	9,079	11,338			●
Year End Target			37899		●

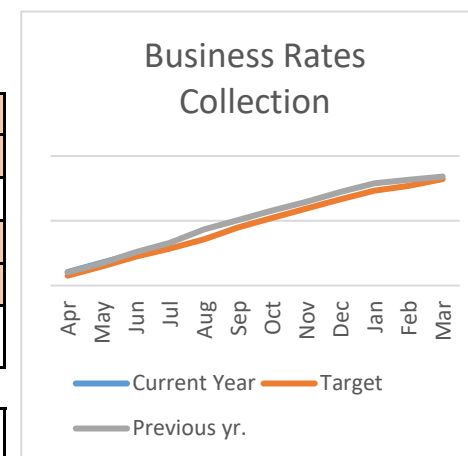
Fraud and Compliance	Q1	Jul-19	Q3	Q4	Yr Target
Single Person Discount Fraud	£689,154.21	£881,266			£500,000
Local Council Tax Support	£50,083.49	£73,578			£150,000
Tenancy Fraud	£36,000	£54,000			£400,000
Other (Council Tax and NDR)	£217,660	£274,005			£250,000
Fraud Identified	£992,897.92	£1,282,849			£1,300,000

Performance Information July 2019

Business Rates

Business Rates Collection					
	Q1	Jul-19	Q3	Q4	
2019/20	£ 9,936,479.00	£ 12,271,820.00	£ -	£ -	●
Target	£ 8,891,311.00	£ 11,393,669.00	£ 26,602,327.00	£ 32,877,803.00	
Refunds	£ 182,408.00	£ 949,165.00	£ -	£ -	
2018/19	£ 10,313,258.00	£ 13,224,418.00	£ 28,860,184.00	£ 33,655,722.00	●

Year End Target	£32,877,803.00	●
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Description

This shows the amount of money required to be collected within the financial year, payable to the NNDR Collection Fund against the actual collection.

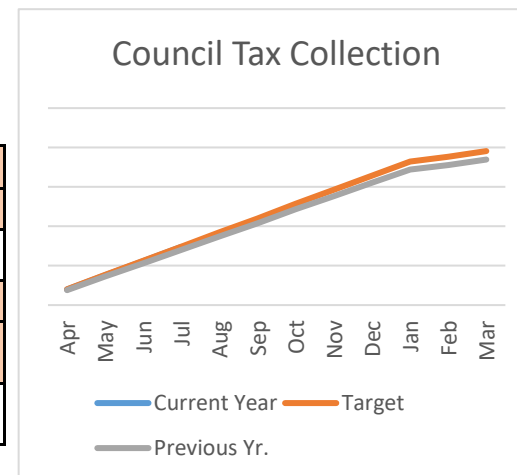
Narrative

Collection is on target for the current financial year.

Further recovery action in 2019/20 has resulted in collection of £18,946. Enforcement action in 2019/20 has resulted in collection of £16,041.

Council Tax

Council Tax Collection					
	Q1	Jul-19	Q3	Q4	
2019/20	£ 22,364,957	£ 29,591,068	£ -	£ -	●
Target	£ 22,495,661	£ 29,719,293	£ 65,774,711	£ 78,183,637	
Refunds	£ 228,283	£ 334,820	£ -	£ -	
2018/19	£ 21,259,174	£ 28,085,754	£ 62,159,365	£ 73,886,227	●
		Year End Target	£78,183,637		●



Description

This shows the amount of money required to be collected within the financial year, payable to the NNDR Collection Fund against the actual collection.

Narrative

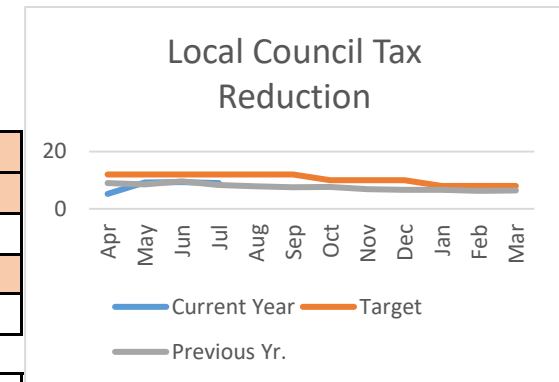
Collection is behind target by £128,225. We have had an increase in the amount of pre-payments for the current financial year, the first Summonses for non-payment were delayed one month by The Court and there are a high level of refunds this year which will all have had an effect. We are closely monitoring the situation.

Further recovery action in 2019/20 has resulted in collection of £53,912. Enforcement action in 2019/20 has resulted in collection of £186,544.

Charging Orders have been obtained to secure £313,092 debt.

Local Council Tax Reduction

Days to process Local Council Tax Support					
	Q1	Jul-19	Q3	Q4	
2019/20	9.34	8.99			●
Target	12.00	12.00	10.00	8.00	
2018/19	9.60	8.36	6.66	6.37	●
Year End Target					
			8		●



Description

This indicator measures the average year to date number of days to process Council Tax reduction new claims and change of circumstances.

Narrative

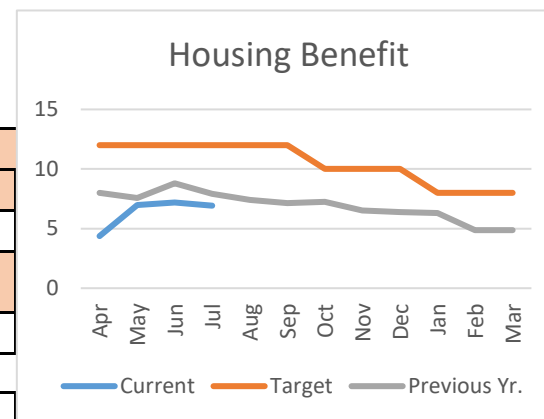
Whilst this indicator has been exceeded, it should be noted we have overachieved this indicator due to the downtime associated with the merger of East Suffolk and West Suffolk systems.

During the first three weeks of April all processing staff throughout the partnership were working on Breckland, East Cambridgeshire and Fenland cases, thereby resulting in exceptional outcomes.

Looking ahead, we expect performance to continue to improve and to achieve the year end target, as we harmonise performance for all Councils by bringing performance back on track for East & West Suffolk.

Housing Benefit

Days to process Housing Benefit					
	Q1	Jul-19	Q3	Q4	
2019/20	7.19	6.92			●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2018/19	8.8	7.92	6.39	4.87	●
Year End Target		8		●	



Description

This indicator measures the average number of days to process Housing Benefit new claims and change of circumstances.

Narrative

Whilst this indicator has been exceeded, it should be noted we have overachieved this indicator due to the downtime associated with the merger of East Suffolk and West Suffolk systems.

During the first three weeks of April all processing staff throughout the partnership were working on Breckland, East Cambridgeshire and Fenland cases, thereby resulting in exceptional outcomes.

Looking ahead, we expect performance to continue to improve and to achieve the year end target, as we harmonise performance for all Councils by bringing performance back on track for East & West Suffolk.

Fraud and Compliance

Following the transfer of Housing Benefit fraud to the DWP on the 1 September 2015, the team continue to be been tasked, in accordance with the Business Case approved by Joint Committee, to identify and prevent fraud leading to an increase in Council Tax income in the following areas:

Local Council Tax Support, Single Person Discount, Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates.

The team are working with Housing Option Teams and also with Housing Associations to tackle Right to buy and subletting abuse where investigation agreements are in place. The team continue to seek opportunities to identify dwellings and businesses not registered or having had an undeclared change in use, leading to increased charges – including possible retrospective charges.

The team are also forging closer working relationships with a number of service areas in an attempt prevent and detect fraud and error.

In an broader sense the team are also working with County in setting up Fraud Hub's in Norfolk and more recently Cambridgeshire. This is an attempt to match data sets across County to increase Council Tax and Business Rate income.

	Q1	Jul-19	Q3	Q4
Single Person Discount Fraud	£195,513.87	£228,762.24		
Local Council Tax Support	£13,959.86	£26,901.91		
Tenancy Fraud	£0.00	£0.00		
Other (Council Tax and NDR)	£28,174.21	£72,002.71		
Fraud Identified	£237,647.94	£327,666.86		



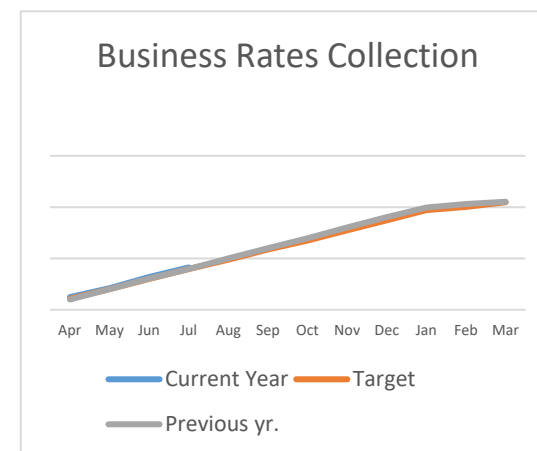
Performance Information July 2019



Business Rates

Business Rates Collection					
	Q1	Jul-19	Q3	Q4	
2019/20	£ 6,372,977	£ 8,241,872	£ -	£ -	●
Target	£ 5,987,332	£ 7,940,146	£ 17,441,307	£ 20,954,355	
Refunds	£ 651,447	£ 768,998	£ -	£ -	
2018/19	£ 6,038,653	£ 7,944,994	£ 18,023,396	£ 21,044,862	●

Full Year Target	£20,954,355	●
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Description

This shows the amount of money required to be collected within the financial year, payable to the NNDR Collection Fund against the actual collection.

Narrative

Collection is on target for the current financial year.

There have been claims by NHS Trusts for charitable rate relief which are currently subject to a High Court appeal. If successful this could result in a backdated refund of £739K

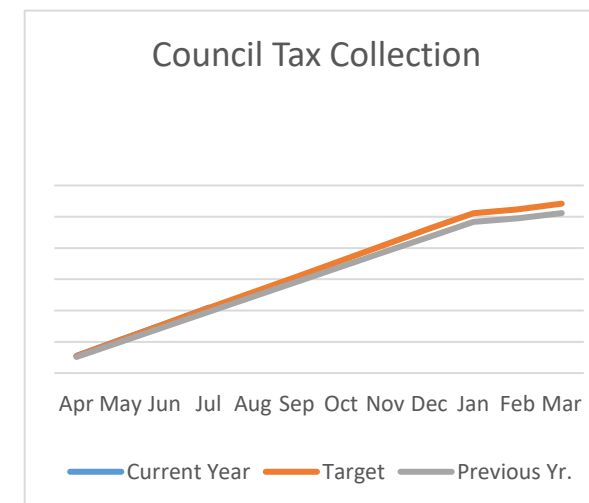
Further recovery action in 2019/20 has resulted in collection of £561. Enforcement action in 2019/20 has resulted in collection of £19,399.



Council Tax



Council Tax Collection					
	Q1	Jul-19	Q3	Q4	
2019/20	£ 15,730,723	£ 20,933,850	£ -	£ -	●
Target	£ 15,691,433	£ 20,798,793	£ 46,170,944	£ 54,194,333	
Refunds	£ 144,400	£ 222,643	£ -	£ -	
2018/19	£ 14,815,307	£ 19,637,500	£ 43,593,006	£ 51,168,413	●
		Year End Target	£ 54,194,333		●



Description

This shows the amount of money required to be collected within the financial year, payable to the NNDR Collection Fund against the actual collection.

Narrative

Collection is on target for the current financial year

Further recovery action in 2019/20 has resulted in collection of £22,214. Enforcement action in 201/20 has resulted in collection of £83,568.

Charging Orders have been obtained to secure £266,104 debt.

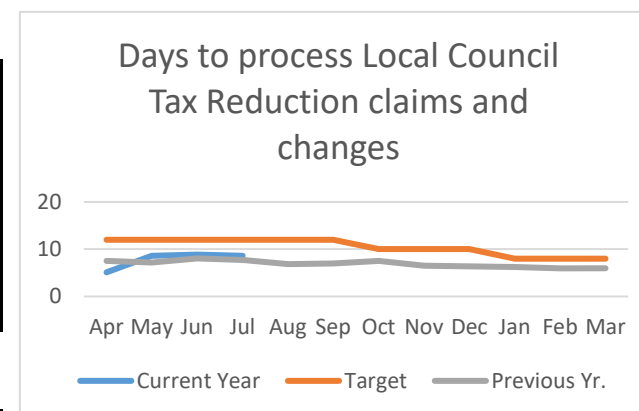


Local Council Tax Reduction



Days to process Local Council Tax Support					
	Q1	Jul-19	Q3	Q4	
2019/20	8.86	8.62			●
Target	12.00	12.00	10.00	8.00	
2018/19	8.05	7.74	6.34	5.99	●

Year End Target	8	●
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Description

This indicator measures the average number of days to process Council Tax reduction new claims and change of circumstances.

Narrative

Whilst this indicator has been exceeded, it should be noted we have overachieved this indicator due to the downtime associated with the merger of East Suffolk and West Suffolk systems.

During the first three weeks of April all processing staff throughout the partnership were working on Breckland, East Cambridgeshire and Fenland cases, thereby resulting in exceptional outcomes.

Looking ahead, we expect performance to continue to improve and to achieve the year end target, as we harmonise performance for all Councils by bringing performance back on track for East & West Suffolk.

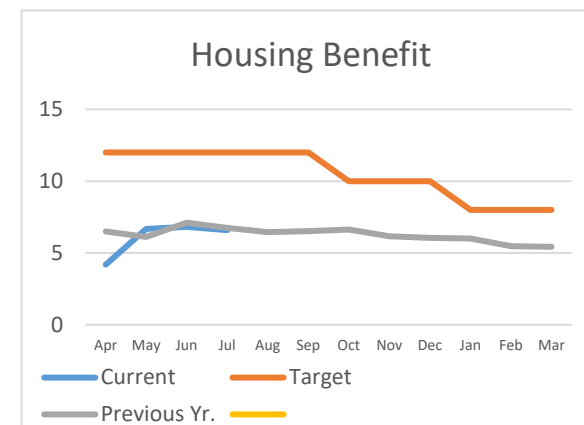


Housing Benefit



Days to process Housing Benefit					
	Apr-19	Jul-19	Q3	Q4	
2019/20	6.82	6.58			●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2018/19	7.11	6.75	6.06	5.43	●

Year End Target	8	●
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Description

This indicator measures the average number of days to process Housing Benefit new claims and change of circumstances.

Narrative

Whilst this indicator has been met for April, it should be noted we have overachieved this indicator due to the downtime associated with the merger of East Suffolk and West Suffolk systems.

During the first three weeks of April all processing staff throughout the partnership were working on Breckland, East Cambridgeshire and Fenland cases, thereby resulting in exceptional outcomes.

Looking ahead, we expect performance to continue to improve and to achieve the year end target, as we harmonise performance for all Councils by bringing performance back on track for East & West Suffolk.



Fraud and Compliance



Fraud and Compliance

Following the transfer of Housing Benefit fraud to the DWP on the 1 September 2015, the team continue to be been tasked, in accordance with the Business Case approved by Joint Committee, to identify and prevent fraud leading to an increase in Council Tax income in the following areas:

Local Council Tax Support, Single Person Discount, Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates.

The team are working with Housing Option Teams and also with Housing Associations to tackle Right to buy and subletting abuse where investigation agreements are in place. The team continue to seek opportunities to identify dwellings and businesses not registered or having had an undeclared change in use, leading to increased charges – including possible retrospective charges.

The team are also forging closer working relationships with a number of service areas in an attempt prevent and detect fraud and error.

In a broader sense the team are also working with County in setting up Fraud Hub's in Norfolk and more recently Cambridgeshire. This is an attempt to match data sets across County to increase Council Tax and Business Rate income.

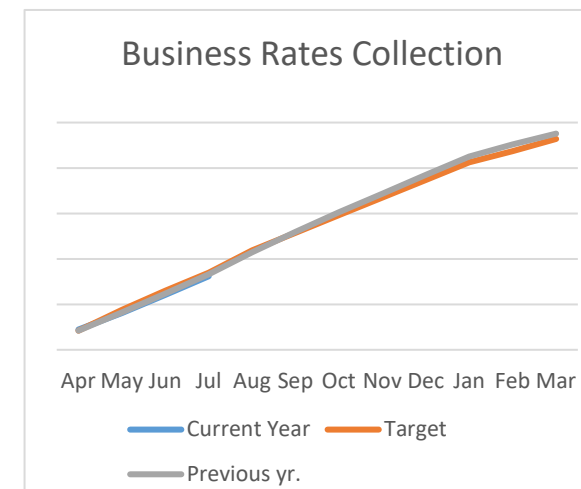
	Q1	Jul-19	Q3	Q4
Single Person Discount Fraud	£34,795.41	£47,367.59		
Local Council Tax Support	£3,362.16	£5,045.87		
Tenancy Fraud	£0.00	£0.00		
Other (Council Tax and NDR)	£56,292.91	£56,292.91		
Fraud Identified	£94,450.48	£108,706.37		

Performance Information July 2019

Business Rates

Business Rates Collection					
	Q1	Jul-19	Q3	Q4	
2019/20	£ 24,147,964	£ 32,365,017	£ -	£ -	●
Target	£ 26,069,598	£ 33,914,208	£ 74,791,849	£ 92,792,211	
Refunds	£ 2,760,260	£ 3,050,947	£ -	£ -	
2018/19	£ 24,739,059	£ 33,260,435	£ 77,021,085	£ 95,129,303	●

Year End Target	92,792,211	●
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Description

This shows the amount of money required to be collected within the financial year, payable to the NNDR Collection Fund against the actual collection.

Narrative

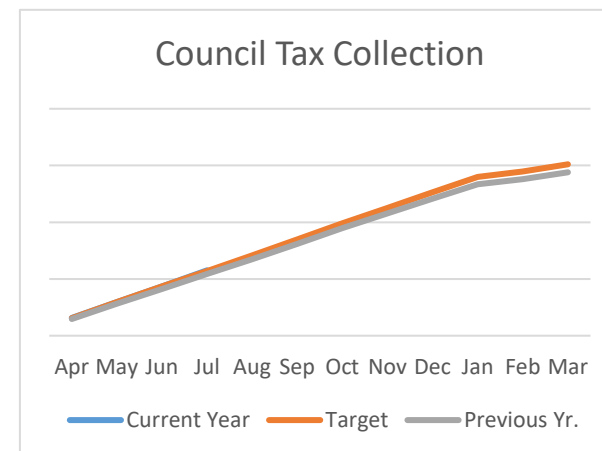
Collection is behind target for the current financial year by £1,549,191. There have been £3M of backdated refunds as a result of reductions in Rateable Value most notably Felixstowe Dock for which a refund of £2M was made. These are accounted for in the Appeals Provision within the Financial Statements. As the appeals are accounted for within the provision it has been decided that the targets will not be amended.

Further recovery action in 2019/20 has resulted in collection of £6,552. Enforcement action in 2019/20 has resulted in collection of £26,071.

Council Tax

Council Tax Collection						
	Q1	Jul-19	Q3	Q4		
2019/20	£ 43,402,134	£ 57,629,165	£ -	£ -		●
Target	£ 43,341,163	£ 57,067,027	£ 126,320,824	£ 151,052,402		
Refunds	£ 426,585	£ 592,617	£ -	£ -		
2018/19	£ 41,318,611	£ 54,403,945	£ 120,661,504	£ 144,003,411		●

Year End Target	151,052,402	●
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Description

This shows the amount of money required to be collected within the financial year, payable to the NNDR Collection Fund against the actual collection.

Narrative

Collection is on target for the current financial year

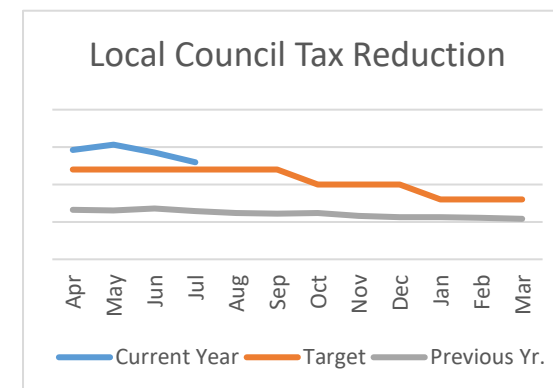
Further recovery action in 2019/20 has resulted in collection of £61,035. Enforcement action in 2019/20 has resulted in collection of £319,613.

Charging Orders have been obtained to secure £490,117 debt.

Local Council Tax Reduction

Days to process Local Council Tax Support					
	Q1	Jul-19	Q3	Q4	
2019/20	14.29	12.97			●
Target	12.00	12.00	10.00	8.00	
2018/19	6.79	6.46	5.65	5.41	●

Year End Target	8	●
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Description

This indicator measures the average number of days to process Council Tax reduction new claims and change of circumstances.

Narrative

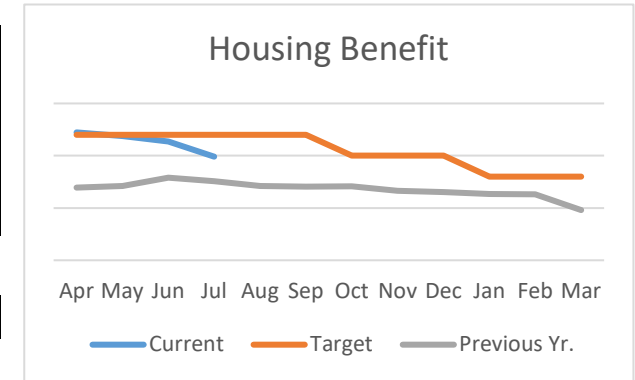
Whilst this indicator has not been met for this quarter, it should be noted we did not expect to achieve the target following the downtime and recovery associated with the merger of East Suffolk and West Suffolk systems.

During the first three weeks of April we were not able to process East Suffolk cases, however, the direction of travel is an improving position with in month processing achieving target and expected to continue to do so.

Housing Benefit

Days to process Housing Benefit					
	Q1	Jul-19	Q3	Q4	
2019/20	11.36	9.91			●
Target	12.00	12.00	12.00	8.00	
2018/19	7.90	7.56	7.05	4.80	●

Year End Target	8	●
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Description

This indicator measures the average number of days to process Housing Benefit new claims and change of circumstances.

Narrative

Despite the downtime associated with the merger of the East Suffolk systems we continue to exceed the target and expect to achieve the year end target, given the direction of travel, which is within year end target.

Fraud and Compliance

Following the transfer of Housing Benefit fraud to the DWP on the 1 September 2015, the team continue to be been tasked, in accordance with the Business Case approved by Joint Committee, to identify and prevent fraud leading to an increase in Council Tax income in the following areas:

Local Council Tax Support, Single Person Discount, Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates.

The team are working with Housing Option Teams and also with Housing Associations to tackle Right to buy and subletting abuse where investigation agreements are in place. The team continue to seek opportunities to identify dwellings and businesses not registered or having had an undeclared change in use, leading to increased charges – including possible retrospective charges.

The team are also forging closer working relationships with a number of service areas in an attempt prevent and detect fraud and error.

In an broader sense the team are also working with County in setting up Fraud Hub's in Norfolk and more recently Cambridgeshire. This is an attempt to match data sets across County to increase Council Tax and Business Rate income.

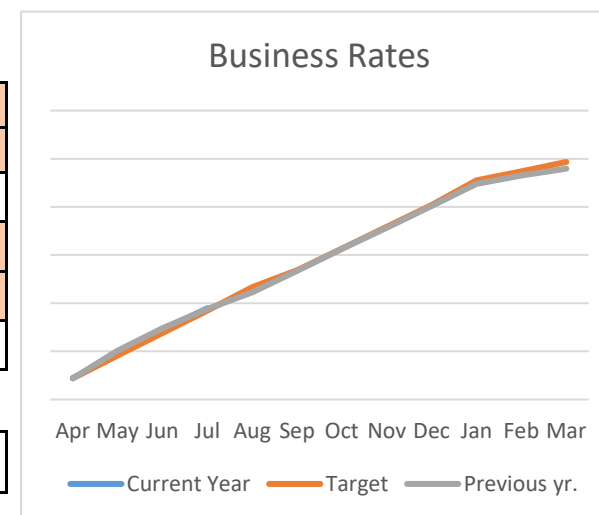
	Q1	Jul-19	Q3	Q4
Single Person Discount Fraud	£115,116.79	£172,070.81		
Local Council Tax Support	£15,070.27	£15,267.75		
Tenancy Fraud	£18,000.00	£18,000.00		
Other (Council Tax and NDR)	£5,332.16	£12,144.35		
Fraud Identified	£153,519.22	£217,482.91		

Performance Information July 2019

Business Rates

Business Rates Collection					
	Q1	Jul-19	Q3	Q4	
2019/20	£ 7,228,152	£ 9,483,729	£ -	£ -	●
Target	£ 6,913,281	£ 9,244,637	£ 20,209,506	£ 24,663,273	
Refunds	£ 302,488	£ 363,151	£ -	£ -	
2018/19	£ 7,407,980	£ 9,407,287	£ 20,109,071	£ 23,969,262	●

Year End Target	£24,663,273	●
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Description

This shows the amount of money required to be collected within the financial year, payable to the NNDR Collection Fund against the actual collection.

Narrative

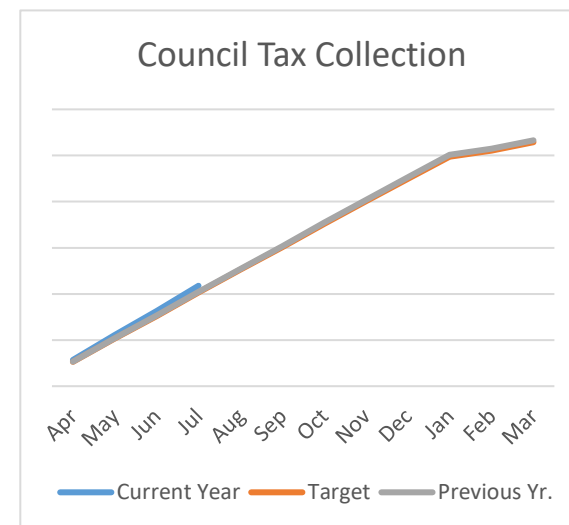
Collection is on target for the current financial year.

There have been claims by NHS Trusts for charitable rate relief which are currently subject to a High Court appeal. If successful this could result in a backdated refund of £1.464M

Council Tax

Council Tax Collection					
	Q1	Jul-19	Q3	Q4	
2019/20	£ 16,330,949	£ 21,766,495	£ -	£ -	●
Target	£ 15,205,594	£ 20,305,486	£ 44,925,775	£ 52,879,158	
Refunds	£ 164,336	£ 230,803	£ -	£ -	
2018/19	£ 15,322,657	£ 20,461,811	£ 45,271,643	£ 53,286,256	●

Year End Target	£52,879,158	●
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Description

This shows the amount of money required to be collected within the financial year, payable to the NNDR Collection Fund against the actual collection.

Narrative

Collection is on target for the current financial year

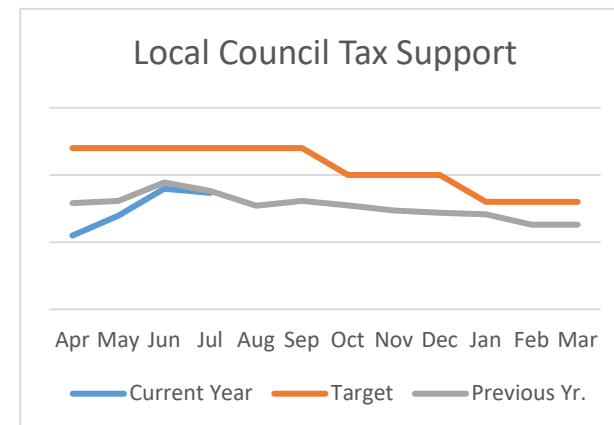
Further recovery action in 2019/20 resulted in collection of £23,881. Enforcement action in 2019/20 resulted in collection of £155,174.

Charging Orders have been obtained to secure £206,415 debt.

Local Council Tax Reduction

Days to process Local Council Tax Support					
	Q1	Jul-19	Q3	Q4	
2019/20	8.98	8.67			●
Target	12.00	12.00	10.00	8.00	
2018/19	9.44	8.80	7.18	6.30	●

Year End Target	8	●
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Description

This indicator measures the average number of days to process Council Tax reduction new claims and change of circumstances.

Narrative

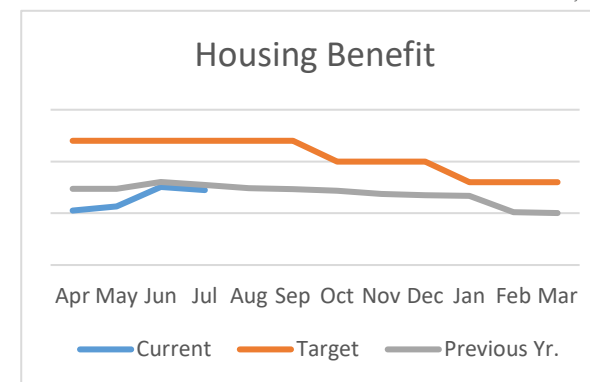
Whilst this indicator has been exceeded, it should be noted we have overachieved this indicator due to the downtime associated with the merger of East Suffolk and West Suffolk systems.

During the first three weeks of April all processing staff throughout the partnership were working on Breckland, East Cambridgeshire and Fenland cases, thereby resulting in exceptional outcomes.

Looking ahead, we expect performance to continue to improve and to achieve the year end target, as we harmonise performance for all Councils by bringing performance back on track for East & West Suffolk.

Housing Benefit

Days to process Housing Benefit					
	Q1	Jul-19	Q3	Q4	
2019/20	7.54	7.24			●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2018/19	8.02	7.74	6.73	5.02	●
Year End Target		8		●	



Description

This indicator measures the average number of days to process Housing Benefit new claims and change of circumstances.

Narrative

Whilst this indicator has been exceeded, it should be noted we have overachieved this indicator due to the downtime associated with the merger of East Suffolk and West Suffolk systems.

During the first three weeks of April all processing staff throughout the partnership were working on Breckland, East Cambridgeshire and Fenland cases, thereby resulting in exceptional outcomes.

Looking ahead, we expect performance to continue to improve and to achieve the year end target, as we harmonise performance for all Councils by bringing performance back on track for East & West Suffolk.

Fraud and Compliance

Fraud and Compliance

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The team are also forging closer working relationships with a number of service areas in an attempt prevent and detect fraud and error.

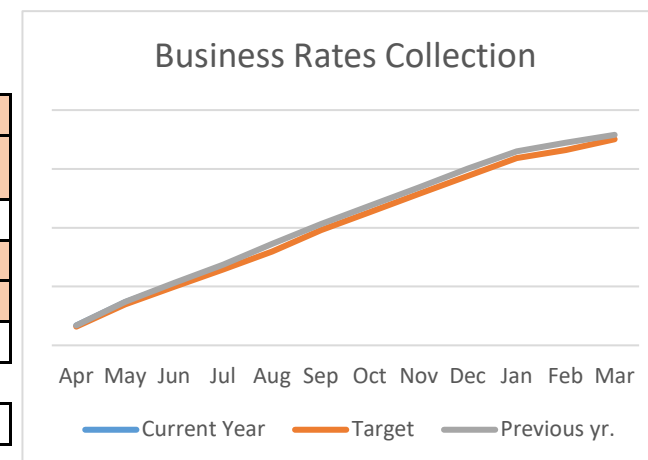
In an broader sense the team are also working with County in setting up Fraud Hub's in Norfolk and more recently Cambridgeshire. This is an attempt to match data sets across County to increase Council Tax and Business Rate income.

	Q1	Jul-19	Q3	Q4
Single Person Discount Fraud	£89,137.00	£114,485.94		
Local Council Tax Support	£4,545.30	£9,634.10		
Tenancy Fraud	£0.00	£0.00		
Other (Council Tax and NDR)	£69,404.85	£73,013.47		
Fraud Identified	£163,087.15	£197,133.51		

Business Rates

Business Rates Collection					
	Q1	Jul-19	Q3	Q4	
2019/20	£ 20,840,864	£ 27,038,041	£ -	£ -	●
Target	£ 19,905,279	£ 25,785,159	£ 57,573,641	£ 70,081,061	
Refunds	£ 440,654	£ 602,737	£ -	£ -	
2018/19	£ 21,206,717	£ 27,423,659	£ 60,044,207	£ 71,576,538	●

Year End Target	70,081,061	●
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Description

This shows the amount of money required to be collected within the financial year, payable to the NNDR Collection Fund against the actual collection.

Narrative

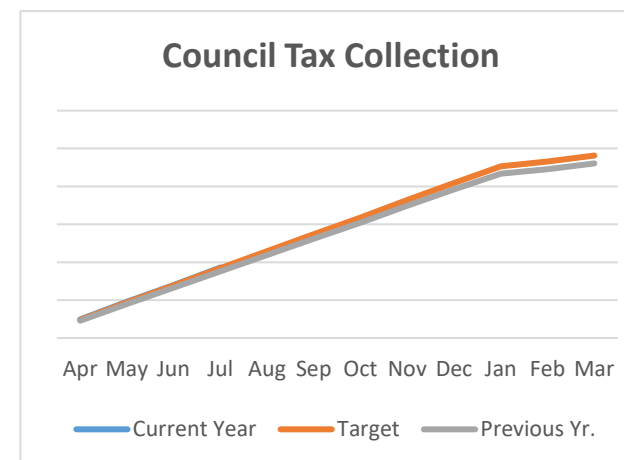
Collection is on target for the current financial year.

There have been claims by NHS Trusts for charitable rate relief which are currently subject to a High Court appeal. If successful this could result in a backdated refund of £4.605M

Further recovery action in 2019/20 resulted in collection of £100,753. Enforcement action in 2019/20 resulted in collection of £43,829.

Council Tax Collection						
	Q1	Jul-19	Q3	Q4		
2019/20	£ 27,937,932	£ 37,214,966	£ -	£ -		●
Target	£ 27,739,132	£ 36,815,843	£ 81,863,213	£ 96,287,011		
Refunds	£ 269,396	£ 377,348	£ -	£ -		
2018/19	£ 26,541,590	£ 35,226,445	£ 78,369,361	£ 92,130,148		●

Year End Target	96,287,011	●
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Description

This shows the amount of money required to be collected within the financial year, payable to the NNDR Collection Fund against the actual collection.

Narrative

Collection is on target for the current financial year

Further recovery action in 2019/20 resulted in collection of £32,913. Enforcement action in 2019/20 resulted in collection of £222,056.

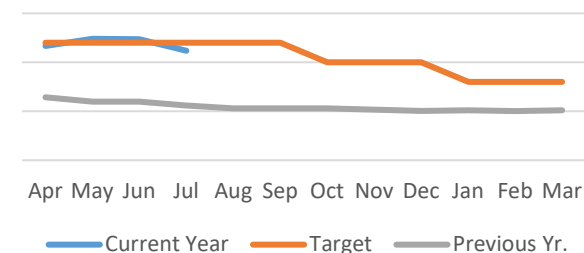
Charging Orders have been obtained to secure £500,394 debt.

Days to process Local Council Tax Support

	Q1	Jul-19	Q3	Q4	
2019/20	12.36	11.18			●
Target	12.00	12.00	10.00	8.00	
2018/19	5.97	5.58	5.05	5.11	●

Year End Target	8	●
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Council Tax Support



Description

This indicator measures the average number of days to process Council Tax reduction new claims and change of circumstances.

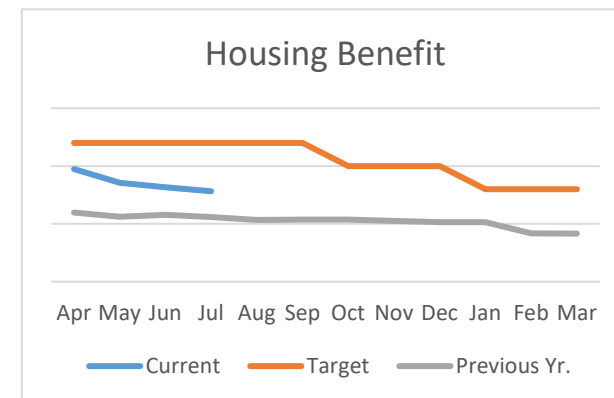
Narrative

Despite the downtime associated with the merger of the West Suffolk systems we are now achieving the target and expect to achieve the year end target.

Housing Benefit

Days to process Housing Benefit					
	Q1	Jul-19	Q3	Q4	
2019/20	8.16	7.82			●
Target	12.00	12.00	10.00	8.00	
2018/19	5.79	5.60	5.14	5.14	●

Year End Target	8	●
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Description

This indicator measures the average number of days to process Housing Benefit new claims and change of circumstances.

Narrative

Despite the downtime associated with the merger of the West Suffolk systems we continue to exceed the target and expect to achieve the year end target.

Fraud and Compliance

Following the transfer of Housing Benefit fraud to the DWP on the 1 September 2015, the team continue to be been tasked, in accordance with the Business Case approved by Joint Committee, to identify and prevent fraud leading to an increase in Council Tax income in the following areas:

Local Council Tax Support, Single Person Discount, Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates.

The team are working with Housing Option Teams and also with Housing Associations to tackle Right to buy and subletting abuse where investigation agreements are in place. The team continue to seek opportunities to identify dwellings and businesses not registered or having had an undeclared change in use, leading to increased charges – including possible retrospective charges.

The team are also forging closer working relationships with a number of service areas in an attempt prevent and detect fraud and error.

In an broader sense the team are also working with County in setting up Fraud Hub's in Norfolk and more recently Cambridgeshire. This is an attempt to match data sets across County to increase Council Tax and Business Rate income.

	Q1	Jul-19	Q3	Q4
Single Person Discount Fraud	£254,591.14	£318,579.58		
Local Council Tax Support	£13,145.90	£16,728.44		
Tenancy Fraud	£18,000.00	£36,000.00		
Other (Council Tax and NDR)	£58,456.09	£60,551.07		
Fraud Identified	£344,193.13	£431,859.09		

Service Updates as at July 2019 -20



Enforcement

The Enforcement Team continue to perform well, having collected £18 Million since the team started of which £1.838 Million has been since the start of this financial year. With effect from July we started taking cases from Norwich City Council. The number of cases sent to us has been low but we have had some good results. We expect to receive an increase in numbers once the first Courts of the financial year have taken place and the necessary notices have been issued.

Further Recovery

The Further Recovery team had their best year for collection in 2018/19 collecting £1,111,595 exceeding the amount collected the previous year by £203K. This financial year the team have again exceeded the amount collected in the same period last financial year and have collected £416K since April. In addition to the monies collected by the further recovery team we also have a further £1.776 Million in secured debt by way of Charging Orders on property owned by the debtor.

As reported previously the Further Recovery team is partly funded by Norfolk & Suffolk County Council, however Cambridgeshire County Council has ceased further funding from April 2018. Whilst monies continue to be paid in respect of the cases previously instigated within Cambridgeshire this will gradually decline if this work is not funded. As previously advised Norfolk County Council have committed to continue providing funding until March 2021 and Suffolk County Council until March 2020, at which point a further review will take place.

Non-Domestic Rates

The Government have introduced a Bill to Parliament to introduce 100% rate relief for public lavatories with effect from 1 April 2020. The Government intend to compensate Local Authorities for any loss of income resulting from the relief.

The Government have introduced measures in new legislation to support progress towards linking Local Authority business rates systems to HMRC digital accounts. The legislation allows HMRC to undertake planning, consultation and testing toward developing a digital system, but it does not make any changes to the current billing and collection system. Further legislation would be required to bring in any subsequent reforms and there would be close engagement with Local Authorities in developing further proposals.

Legislation is progressing to bring forward the date of the next re-valuation to 1 April 2021 and every three years thereafter.

Council Tax

In order to maximise the New Homes Bonus, which is based on the number of new properties in the year plus reduction in empty homes as at October every year, we are undertaking the annual review of empty properties and are now following up non responses which may include visits.

Benefits

Benefits performance has met profiled targets for all indicators except the time taken to process Council Tax Support cases for East Suffolk (12.97 days against 12 days). However, the direction of travel is an improving position with in month processing achieving target and expected to continue to do so.

Following the merger work for East Suffolk and West Suffolk with associated loss of systems for three weeks, we have worked hard to recover the work position.

Inevitably, this has had an impact on performance for quarter 1 and the year to date figure as the year unfolds, although we aim to achieve the end of year target. We continue to prioritise work allocation to ensure benefit is awarded to minimise customer impact and are targeting resources to improve the position as we harmonise performance for all indicators.

Following a regular discussion with the DWP, we have been informed the DWP are very happy with how we managed the two mergers, especially how we have dealt with Housing Benefit performance during this period and the level of current performance, as well as our direction of travel for all five partners.

The Strategic Manager (Benefits) continues to attend national DWP/LA Welfare Steering Groups. These meetings enable input into shaping and influencing current and proposed operational and Government grant funding matters, Universal Credit plans, tackling fraud and error and data share. This has led to the DWP inviting ARP to meetings with LAs to share our knowledge of establishing and operating shared services, along with good practice. Furthermore, ARP has been one of a handful of LAs participating in a national review of DWP data notifications when a customer transfers from Housing Benefit to Universal Credit – we had flagged high volume of valueless records causing unnecessary work. DWP have worked with us throughout a trial and accept our results that 92% of records are worthless, so are now taking steps to redesign their data share processes for all Councils. In November we are hosting a regional DWP led LA engagement event at Thetford, focusing on Universal Credit.

In August the DWP recognised ARP as a top performer for all partner Councils actioning DWP data to identify, prevent and process benefit error notifications. We have been invited to share our best practice as an exemplar for other LAs. This demonstrates efficient and effective use of resources and processes.

Fraud and Compliance

Suffolk and Norfolk County Councils continue to support the review of Single Person Discounts, Cambridgeshire ceased any further funding from April 2018. East Cambridge and Fenland together with all Cambridgeshire local authorities are in discussions with Cambridgeshire County Council regarding a Cambridgeshire Fraud Hub. The proposed model links to funding the review of Single Person Discounts at a local authority level. As previously advised, Norfolk County Council have committed to continue providing funding until March 2021 and Suffolk County Council until March 2020, at which point a further review will take place. Norfolk County Council have additionally funded a Premium review of Single Person Discounts in Breckland District Council with matches against a number of additional data sets held within the National Fraud Initiative (NFI). Whilst limited work on Cambridgeshire cases continues, without County funding the level of fraud identified will decline if this work is not funded.

DWP have published latest data for the number of fraud referrals made by an LA to the DWP – all partner Councils have again exceeded the national average by up to 200% or more. This is a continuing success for our ARP fraud and compliance team who continue to work closely with local DWP fraud teams.

The ARP Management arrangement with Norwich City Council continues to allow us to employ an additional resource fully funded by Norwich City Council and Norfolk County Council, to undertake similar work for Norwich City Council.

Breckland Council and Norwich City Council are also part of the newly formed Norfolk Fraud Hub. The Fraud Hub is fully funded by Norfolk County Council and is matching data from all authorities to identify Fraud and Error across the county. The Fraud Team are working alongside Norfolk

ARP Website and Online Self Service

The Anglia Revenues website design has been enhanced to be more transactional and as straight forward as possible for customers and is showing a significant increase of website traffic for Council Tax, Business Rates, Housing Benefit and Local Council Tax Reduction Schemes..

Analysis is demonstrating the effectiveness of the transactional design of the ARP website and has seen a 10% increase in usage in the first four months of financial year 2019/20 compared to the same period in 2018/19 and work will continue to improve the customer journey.

Better Customer Journeys Programme

ARP are in the process of initiating a partnership wide program of enhancements and improvements for the customer. The starting point is the understanding of a clear baseline of current working which includes clear expectations between ARP and its Partner Services with agreed operational improvements being realised from March 2020. Building on this foundation will include the innovative development of the Capita E-forms Solution and an enhanced self-serve option, improving the customer experience with improved access and quality of service. Baselining will identify the improvements for both internal and external communications.

The second element of “Better Customer Journeys” is a change delivery programme using recognised project management tools and processes. One of the lessons learned from the recent merger project for East Suffolk and West Suffolk Councils was the benefit of a dedicated internal resource for programme management. This being preferable to the costly exercise of employing an external management consultancy.

The third element, the “Horizon”, will look at the opportunities for the Anglia Revenues Partnership to continue an ongoing transformation programme and engage with multiple services and agencies, leading to better outcomes for residents and businesses, ultimately a “Better Customer Journey”.

External Mailing Contractor

Each year the Anglia Revenues Partnership produces an output of over one million letters, with 93% of this output being printed and despatched by an external Mailing contractor, over 400,000 of which is over the Annual Billing period in March.

With the support and professional guidance from the Procurement section at Breckland Council, there has been a re-tendering exercise to award a further contract of up to five years through the Crown Commercial Services Framework. A fair, open and transparent evaluation was undertaken with the result that Critiqom Ltd. will continue to be the ARP mailing provider for at least the next three years, with an option to extend to five years.

Please note that particularly with the general move towards online correspondence via the internet, the traditional mailing market solutions have become extremely competitive. Having modern streamlined processes and the economies of scale enjoyed by the ARP, the direct cost of mailing is significantly reduced.