

A G E N D A

ANGLIA REVENUES & BENEFITS PARTNERSHIP JOINT COMMITTEE

DATE & TIME: Tuesday, 8th December, 2020 at **11.00 am**
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

THIS MEETING WILL BE STREAMED LIVE VIA THE LINK BELOW AND WILL BE
ACTIVATED AT THE START OF THE MEETING

<https://www.breckland.gov.uk/virtual-committee-meetings>

For the attention of:

Mr J.P. Cowen, Breckland Council (Chairman)
Mr D Ambrose Smith, East Cambridgeshire District Council (Vice-Chairman)
Mrs S. Broughton, West Suffolk District Council
Mr M. Cook, East Suffolk Council
Mrs J. French, Fenland District Council

1. MINUTES

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2020.

2. APOLOGIES

To receive apologies for absence.

3. URGENT BUSINESS

To note whether the Chairman proposes to accept any items of urgent business pursuant to Section 100(B)(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972.

4. DECLARATIONS

5. PERFORMANCE AND SERVICE UPDATES (STANDING ITEM)

Report of Stuart Philpot, ARP Strategic Manager (Support).

6. ARP FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE 2020-21

Report of Alison Chubbock, BDC Chief Accountant (Deputy S151 Officer).

Page(s)
herewith

1 - 6

7 - 38

39 - 43

	<u>Page(s) herewith</u>
7. <u>ARP JOINT COMMITTEE PARTNERSHIP BUDGET</u> Report of Alison Chubbock, BDC Chief Accountant (Deputy S151 Officer).	44 - 47
8. <u>ANGLIA REVENUES PARTNERSHIP SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN AND RISK REGISTER</u> Report of Paul Corney, Head of ARP.	48 - 63
9. <u>WELFARE REFORM UPDATE (STANDING ITEM)</u> Report of Adrian Mills, ARP Strategic Manager (Billing & Benefits).	64 - 67
10. <u>FORTHCOMING ISSUES (STANDING ITEM)</u> To note any items.	
11. <u>NEXT MEETING</u> To note the arrangements for the next meeting on Tuesday, 16 March 2021 at 11am.	

BRECKLAND COUNCIL
EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
EAST SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL
FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL
WEST SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

ANGLIA REVENUES AND BENEFITS PARTNERSHIP JOINT COMMITTEE

Held on Tuesday, 15 September 2020 at 11.00 am
Virtual meeting via Teams

PRESENT

Mr J.P. Cowen (Chairman)	Mr M. Cook
Mr D Ambrose Smith (Vice-Chairman)	Mrs K. French (Substitute Member)
Mrs S. Broughton	

In Attendance

Paul Corney	- Head of ARP
Jo Andrews	- Strategic Manager (Revenues)
Adrian Mills	- Strategic Manager (Billing & Benefits) ARP
Stuart Philpot	- Strategic Manager (Support Services) ARP
Sam Anthony	- Head of HR & OD
Nick Khan	- Strategic Director (East Suffolk)
Rachael Mann	- Assistant Director (Resources & Performance)
Ian Smith	- Finance Manager & S151 Officer (East Cambs)
Teresa Smith	- Democratic Services Team Leader
Julie Britton	- Democratic Services Officer
Leah Mickleborough	- Service Manager - Democratic Services/Monitoring Officer

50/20 CHAIRPERSON AND VICE-CHAIRPERSON (AGENDA ITEM 1)

After being duly proposed and seconded and with no other nominations being made it was:

RESOLVED that Councillor Philip Cowen be appointed as Chairman for the ensuing year.

After being duly proposed and seconded and with no other nominations being made it was:

RESOLVED that Councillor David Ambrose-Smith be appointed as Vice-Chairman for the ensuing year.

51/20 TREASURER (AGENDA ITEM 2)

After being duly proposed and seconded and with no other nominations being made it was **RESOLVED** that:

Breckland Council be appointed as Treasurer for the ensuing year.

Action By

Action By

52/20 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 3)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 December 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

53/20 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 4)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Jan French and Alison Chubbock, Chief Accountant (BDC).

Councillor Kim French was in attendance as substitute.

54/20 URGENT BUSINESS (AGENDA ITEM 5)

None.

55/20 DECLARATIONS (AGENDA ITEM 6)

None.

56/20 PERFORMANCE AND SERVICE UPDATES (STANDING ITEM) (AGENDA ITEM 7)

Stuart Philpot, the Strategic Manager (Support Services) ARP presented the report.

Notwithstanding the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, Members were informed that subject to the Council Tax collection rates, all targets had been achieved following the resilience demonstrated by the ARP employees during these unprecedented times.

The collection of Council Tax was behind target by £721,415 and Jo Andrews, the Strategic Manager (Revenues) ARP, explained that Officers had not been able to take normal action to recover outstanding amounts through the Magistrates Court due to the restrictions in place in respect of Covid and also due to the increase in Council Tax support there was less Council Tax to collect. A good response had been received to the soft reminders that had been sent out earlier in the year and many instalment arrangements had been made. Statutory reminders had been sent in August 2020 to those who had not responded and had not paid anything toward their Council Tax.

All targets had been met in respect of Business Rates collection except for East Suffolk. Collection targets had been adjusted to reflect the amount of Government funded rate relief awarded to businesses in early April 2020. However, since then new guidance had been issued increasing the number of eligible businesses and others have been identified. This had increased the amount of relief awarded, which was a significant amount for East Suffolk. The authority would be receiving this funding, but it was not expected to be received in this financial year. Also, in respect of East Suffolk, one significant ratepayer was currently in arrears with instalments amounting to £1.8M and there have been backdated refunds of £862K made in this financial year mostly in respect of appeals against rateable values.

Councillor Broughton thanked all ARP staff for their hard work and

Action By

commitment throughout this pandemic. Referring to the business rates issue, she asked what could be done going forward to prevent businesses going under.

The Strategic Manager (Revenues) ARP pointed out that this year quite a considerable number of businesses had received 100% rate relief and NNDR collection was 'holding up' for most Councils; therefore, it was hoped, going forward, that this would be maintained. Discussions with the Courts were being had in respect of setting Hearing dates but in comparison with Council Tax, NNDR cases were normally relatively low.

The Chairman also congratulated all staff and felt that the business continuity exercise that ARP had carried out in December 2019 had put the Partnership in good stead. He also thanked the Strategic Manager for her update. He pointed out that he had been having conversations with Alison Chubbock, the Chief Accountant (BDC) about the issues with NNDR and felt that moving forward, a close eye needed to be kept on this matter as NNDR could be further affected in the next quarter.

Councillor Ambrose-Smith also conveyed his thanks and congratulated all ARP staff.

The Performance and Service updates report was otherwise noted.

57/20 ARP FORECAST FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE 2020-21 (AGENDA ITEM 8)

Paul Corney, the Head of ARP presented the report in the Chief Accountant's absence.

This report had been based on information provided by each of the partner Councils as at 31 July 2020.

The forecast at this stage of the year showed a deficit against budget of £690k. There was a small overspend due to additional software costs incurred for the award of business grants due to Covid and a large shortfall in income due to loss of income from enforcement work carried out over the 4-month period. All details could be found at Appendix A of the report.

The Head of ARP alluded to the lack of Hearings that the Strategic Manager (Revenues) had mentioned earlier and further alluded to the grants received from Government to cover the extra burden placed on the Business Rate Team awarding many business grants due to Covid. These grants would be retained by each Council and would not therefore show against the ARP over spend.

The Head of ARP also mentioned the Government grant that could be claimed by each Council in respect of lost income and he was pleased to announce that final Government guidance had very recently been received and it appeared that 75p in every £ should be provided in respect of ARP Enforcement lost income. Breckland Council would be claiming this funding and, assuming the amount could be claimed, it would be distributed accordingly.

The Chairman felt that this would be very good news.

The report and appendix were otherwise noted.

Action By

58/20 COVID RESPONSE REPORT (AGENDA ITEM 9)

The ARP Strategic Manager (Support) presented the report that informed Members of the impact of Covid-19 on the provision of ARP services.

Referring to when the pandemic first started in March 2020 and following lockdown, 296 staff across the four partner authorities had migrated to working from home.

There had also been many other demands on resource since March to communicate with and update customers, Government and the partner authorities.

These included:

- Updates to website
- Updates to recorded messages on the telephones (RAD messages)
- Amendments to templates which mention recovery action/costs
- Additional web forms published to allow ratepayers to request payment arrangements
- Provision of statistical data for comparison & monitoring of progress
- Regular review meetings with partner authorities for Grant application queries
- Daily monitoring of info from the Government
- Government returns

To address the additional pressure on resources, additional agency staff had been taken on and staff had been re-deployed from other departments to support the Business Rates Team.

Relief had been granted to 5,444 businesses amounting to over £100M and various grants provided by Government had been awarded.

Mitel phone systems had to be re-configured for home workers. A Communication Group had been set up using WhatsApp, and an ARP Staff Support chat group had been created on Facebook.

The post room at Breckland House operates for all partners, receiving all ARP post and document submissions centrally to Breckland House. The post opening procedures had been immediately revised in line with Government guidelines and included a reduction to two members of staff opening the post 2 days after delivery, with gloves and hand sanitising available to staff.

The ARP Strategic Manager (Support) stated that all partners, particularly West Suffolk, had played a huge part in getting all the IT infrastructure in place to allow ARP operations to continue during the transition to homeworking, and he formally thanked them for their commitment.

The forward planning of the desktop disaster recovery exercise and the business continuity actions carried out in December 2019 had put ARP in a very good position.

Councillor Cook felt that the ARP had done an incredible job and had achieved damage limitation. All had learnt to cope with this new technology, and he hoped that all working practices would be continually revised going forward.

Action By

Councillor Broughton admired everyone for working from home but asked if there were any plans to gradually return to the office. Members were informed that for those who were working in the office information had been circulated to use Teams rather than walking round the building and speaking to people in person. Additionally, all sites were constantly being sanitised.

The Head of ARP stated that the strategic work that Officers had been involved in was to get a better understanding of what office space would be needed in future. All Team Managers had been having regular one to ones and staff meetings. The one to ones were increasing and the discussions held were not all about work.

In response to a question, the Head of ARP explained the process in respect of the additional claim forms as noted on page 50 of the agenda pack.

The Chairman added his thanks for the work carried out across all Councils. He asked how ARP was going to manage going forward in respect of customers and clients visiting the building. Members were informed that the Customer Strategy Group (Customer Leads from each Council and ARP Managers) were discussing each Councils plans for customers to come back into their buildings and ARPs part in these plans.

ARP was also working with Capita to enable more to be done on-line and had an assisted process for customers who found self-service difficult.

The report was otherwise noted.

59/20 WELFARE REFORM UPDATE (STANDING ITEM) (AGENDA ITEM 10)

Adrian Mills, ARP Strategic Director (Billing and Benefits), presented the update on Welfare Reform.

Several changes were highlighted (see paragraph 2.2.3 of the report) in respect of Universal Credit (UC). Due to Covid-19, DWP had stopped the Harrogate migration pilot and plans were now on hold. However, in the interim, new UC claims had been submitted but no further information had yet been received from DWP.

The Chairman asked what was happening with the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB). Members were informed that DWP would be issuing a report suggesting possible procurement which would be shared in due course.

Following further discussion, the report was otherwise noted.

60/20 FORTHCOMING ISSUES (STANDING ITEM) (AGENDA ITEM 11)

The Chairman said that he would like to see the following update reported on in a future Welfare reform report:

- How CAB advice provided to DWP customers concerning UC would be provided once the CAB contract ends.

61/20 NEXT MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 12)

It was noted that the next meeting would most probably be held virtually via 'Teams' but this would be confirmed nearer the time.

ARP

Action By

It was agreed that the pre-meetings would also be re-instated in future, details to be confirmed.

The Chairman thanked everyone involved for all their hard work and to the Officers for setting up these virtual meetings and sorting out all the technical difficulties.

The Chairman and the Vice-Chairman also thanked the former Chairman, Councillor Broughton for her previous term in office.

The meeting closed at 12.00 pm

CHAIRMAN



Joint Committee Performance Report October 2020



CONTENT PAGE

Section		
1)	Combined Partner Performance	1
2)	Breckland Performance Reports	2-6
3)	East Cambridgeshire Performance Reports	7-11
4)	East Suffolk Performance Reports	12-16
5)	Fenland Performance Reports	17-21
6)	West Suffolk Performance Reports	22-26
∞	7) Anglia Revenues Service Update Report	27 -30

All Partner Councils Combined



Business Rates Collection					
	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	
2020/21	£ 40,382,156	£ 80,234,076	£ 94,112,908	£ -	●
Target	£ 38,080,964	£ 78,313,282	£ 91,704,016	£ 148,138,900	●
2019/20	£ 68,526,436	£ 137,479,211	£ 158,709,340	£ 243,658,978	●
Year End Target				£148,138,900	●

Council Tax Collection					
	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	
2020/21	£127,454,324	£251,468,250	£294,950,715	£0	●
Target	£131,101,223	£258,456,805	£302,131,273	£454,258,929	●
2019/20	£125,766,695	£247,998,105	£289,920,459	£439,901,785	●
Year End Target				£454,258,929	●

Number of Electronic Forms Received					
	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	
2020/21	12,089	23,189	27,950	0	●
2019/20	9,375	19,525	23,237	36,405	●
Year End Target				36405	●

Fraud and Compliance	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	Yr Target
Single Person Discount Fraud	£529,263	£942,485	£1,071,052	£0	£500,000
Local Council Tax Support	£6,050	£20,001	£38,439	£0	£150,000
Tenancy Fraud	£6,480	£105,960	£105,960	£0	£400,000
Other (Council Tax and NDR)	£113,556	£301,455	£327,319	£0	£250,000
Fraud Identified	£655,349	£1,369,901	£1,542,770	£0	£1,300,000

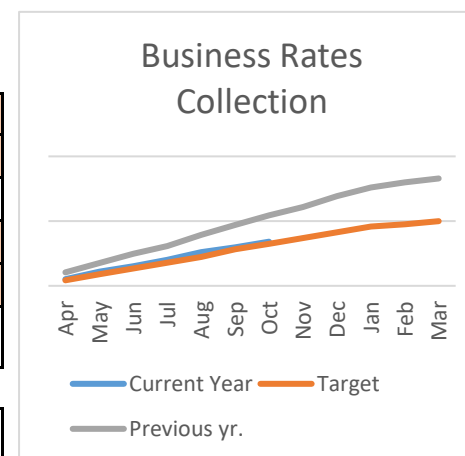
Performance Information October 2020

Business Rates

Business Rates Collection					
	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	
2020/21	£ 6,046,513	£ 11,935,167	£ 13,639,228	£ -	●
Target	£ 5,351,728	£ 11,332,757	£ 13,009,638	£ 19,979,420	
Refunds	£ 403,258	£ 1,240,252	£ 1,409,366	£ -	
2019/20	£ 9,936,479	£ 18,830,045	£ 21,827,359	£ 33,171,404	●

10

Year End Target	£ 19,979,420	●
------------------------	---------------------	---



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.

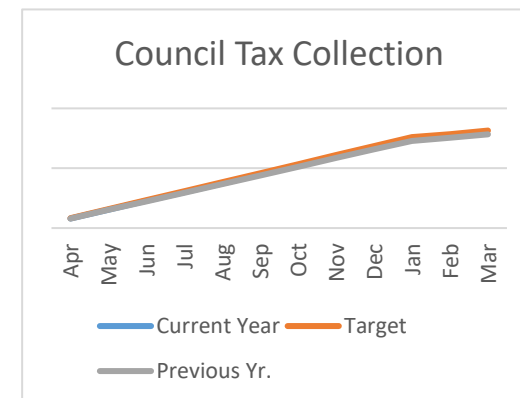
Narrative

Collection is on target for the current financial year. Targets have been amended to reflect the grants which will be received this year in respect of the rate reliefs funded by Government.

Further recovery action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £1,400. Enforcement action in 2021/21 has resulted in collection of £19,438.

Council Tax

Council Tax Collection					
	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	
2020/21	£ 22,830,485	£ 44,806,050	£ 52,687,463	£ -	●
Target	£ 23,306,834	£ 45,717,564	£ 53,415,906	£ 81,463,941	
Refunds	£ 204,527	£ 489,303	£ 559,238	£ -	
2019/20	£ 22,364,957	£ 43,876,573	£ 51,268,089	£ 78,299,417	●



11

Year End Target	£81,463,941	●
-----------------	-------------	---

Description

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

Narrative

Collection is behind target by £728,443. The Government is funding a hardship scheme which has provided up to £150 to each LCTRS recipient of working age. Targets have been adjusted to reflect these payments. Whilst Covid has affected some customers ability to pay, we have only recently been able to take our normal action to recover outstanding amounts through the Magistrates Court. Also, the amount of Council Tax support awarded has increased during this financial year, reducing the amount to be collected.

Further recovery action in 20/21 has resulted in collection of £27,095. Enforcement action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £249,975.

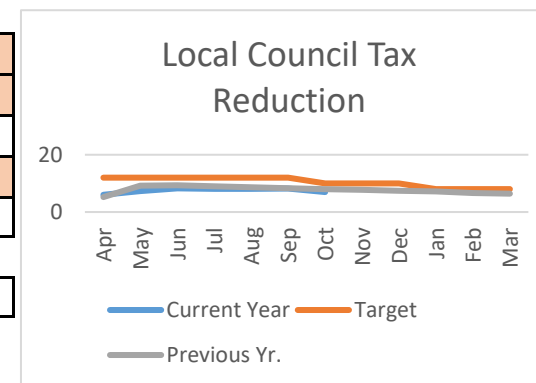
Charging Orders have been obtained to secure £368,532 debt.

Local Council Tax Reduction

Days to process Local Council Tax Support

	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	
2020/21	8.26	8.20	6.98	0.00	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	9.34	8.26	8.01	6.43	●

Year End Target	8	●
-----------------	---	---



Description

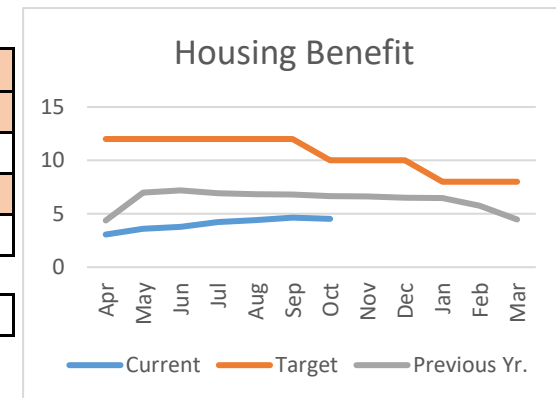
This indicator measures the average year to date number of days to process Council Tax reduction new claims and change of circumstances.

Narrative

This indicator is currently being met and is expected to achieve target at the end of the year, although an economic downturn could increase demand thereby impacting processing performance.

Housing Benefit

Days to process Housing Benefit					
	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	
2020/21	3.77	4.64	4.52	0.00	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	7.19	6.81	6.64	4.47	●
Year End Target		8		●	



13

Description

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

Narrative

This indicator is currently being met and is expected to achieve target at the end of the year, although an economic downturn could increase demand thereby impacting processing performance.

Fraud and Compliance

Following the transfer of Housing Benefit fraud to the DWP on the 1 September 2015, the team continue to be 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.

Recent involvement includes a closer working relationship with both Planning Enforcement and Economic Development.

In a broader sense the team are also working with County in setting up the Fraud Hub in Norfolk. This is an attempt to match data sets across County to increase Council Tax and Business Rate income. Funding from Norfolk county continues to support the Premium Single Person Discount Reviews.

The team are also working on a trial with NFI relating to Council Tax voids and all ARP partners are subscribing to the NFI Mortality Data set matches.

	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4
Single Person Discount Fraud	£117,886	£236,327	£257,646	£0
Local Council Tax Support	£1,346	£5,477	£10,311	£0
Tenancy Fraud	£0	£0	£0	£0
Other (Council Tax and NDR)	£53,563	£65,107	£65,107	£0
Fraud Identified	£172,794	£306,911	£333,064	£0



Performance Information October 2020

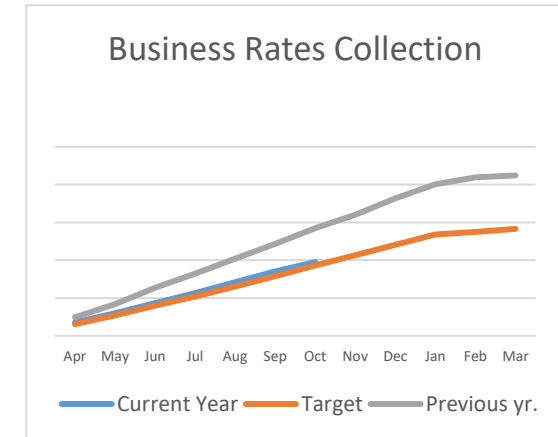


Business Rates

Business Rates Collection					
	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	
2020/21	£ 4,321,819	£ 8,513,137	£ 9,770,943	£ -	●
Target	£ 3,978,590	£ 7,915,784	£ 9,304,153	£ 14,153,152	
Refunds	£ 219,614	£ 429,251	£ 666,584	£ -	
2019/20	£ 6,372,977	£ 12,173,009	£ 14,254,670	£ 20,979,468	●

OT

Full Year Target	£14,153,152	●
------------------	-------------	---



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. Targets have been amended to reflect the grants which will be received this year in respect of the rate reliefs funded by Government.

There have been claims by NHS Trusts for charitable rate relief which have been subject to a High Court appeal. If successful this could result in a backdated refund of £553K. The High Court have rejected the claim that the NHS Trusts are charities, however the NHS trusts are now appealing this decision.

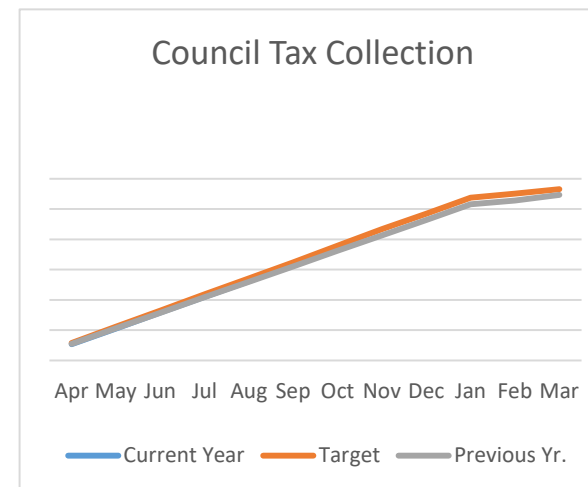
Further recovery action in 2020/21 has not resulted in any collection. Enforcement action in 20/21 has resulted in collection of £9,463.



Council Tax



Council Tax Collection					
	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	
2020/21	£ 15,859,812	£ 31,561,919	£ 36,957,731	£ -	●
Target	£ 16,420,947	£ 32,428,966	£ 37,870,561	£ 56,565,439	
Refunds	£ 149,975	£ 342,403	£ 404,086	£ -	
2019/20	£ 15,730,723	£ 31,067,215	£ 36,283,378	£ 52,780,989	●



16

Year End Target	£ 56,565,439	●
-----------------	--------------	---

Description

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

Narrative

Collection is behind target by £912,830. The Government is funding a hardship scheme which has provided up to £150 to each LCTRS recipient of working age. Targets have been adjusted to reflect these payments. Whilst Covid has affected some customers ability to pay, we have only recently been able to take our normal action to recover outstanding amounts through the Magistrates Court. Also, the amount of Council Tax support awarded has increased during the financial year, reducing the amount to be collected.

Further recovery action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £12,547. Enforcement action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £107,399.

Charging Orders have been obtained to secure £312,386 debt.



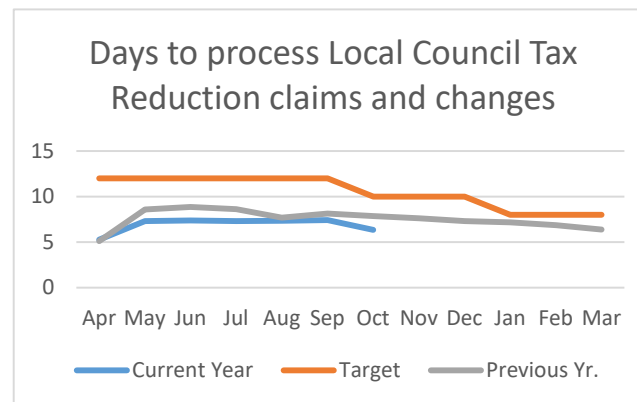
Local Council Tax Reduction



Days to process Local Council Tax Support					
	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	
2020/21	7.37	7.42	6.33	0.00	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	8.86	8.12	7.86	6.38	●

17

Year End Target	8	●
-----------------	---	---



Description

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

Narrative

This indicator is currently being met and is expected to achieve target at the end of the year, although an economic downturn could increase demand thereby impacting processing performance.

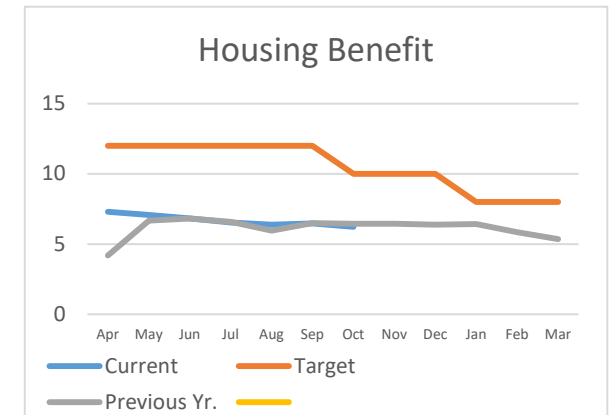


Housing Benefit



Days to process Housing Benefit					
	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	
2020/21	6.82	6.48	6.23	0.00	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	6.82	6.50	6.46	5.36	●

Year End Target	8	●
-----------------	---	---



Description

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

Narrative

This indicator is currently being met and is expected to achieve target at the end of the year, although an economic downturn could increase demand thereby impacting processing performance.



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 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 review of newly awarded Single Person Discounts continues to provide positive outcomes.

The team are working with the largest Social Housing provider in the authority to tackle Right to Buy and subletting abuse.

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 trying to progress closer working relationships with service areas in an attempt prevent and detect fraud and error.

In a broader sense the team are also working with Cambridgeshire County in setting up the Fraud Hub in Cambridgeshire. This is an attempt to match data sets across County to increase Council Tax and Business Rate income. A business case and project team is progressing the Cambridgeshire Fraud Hub.

The team are also to review ARP matches for all partners after subscribing to the NFI Mortality Data set matches in June 2020.

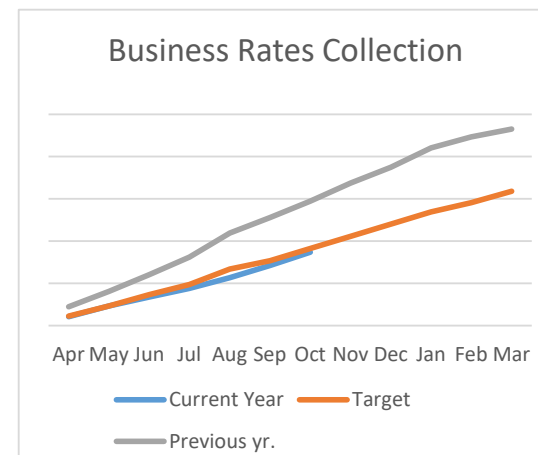
	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4
Single Person Discount Fraud	£27,997	£40,118	£53,075	£0
Local Council Tax Support	£2,122	£2,610	£2,610	£0
Tenancy Fraud	£0	£93,000	£93,000	£0
Other (Council Tax and NDR)	£0	£101,939	£101,939	£0
Fraud Identified	£30,119	£237,667	£250,624	£0

Performance Information October 2020

Business Rates

Business Rates Collection					
	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	
2020/21	£ 13,586,679	£ 28,476,749	£ 34,751,486	£ -	●
Target	£ 14,599,314	£ 30,783,361	£ 36,552,166	£ 63,596,344	
Refunds	£ 613,691	£ 1,733,063	£ 2,110,452	£ -	
2019/20	£ 24,147,964	£ 51,103,221	£ 58,955,089	£ 89,323,475	●

Year End Target	63,596,344	●
------------------------	-------------------	---



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 £1,800,680 for the current financial year. Targets have been amended to reflect the grants which will be received this year in respect of the rate reliefs funded by Government.

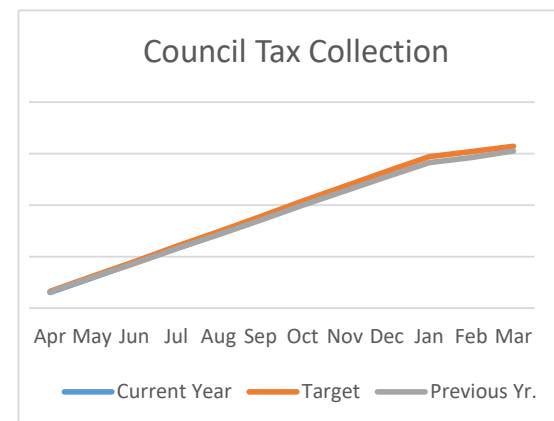
One significant ratepayer is in arrears with instalments amounting to £2.9M and there have been backdated refunds of £1.7M made in this financial year mostly in respect of appeal against rateable values.

Further recovery action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £11,650. Enforcement action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £16,638.

Council Tax

Council Tax Collection					
	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	
2020/21	£ 43,986,884	£ 86,547,244	£ 101,529,943	£ -	●
Target	£ 45,144,195	£ 88,858,483	£ 104,053,205	£ 157,132,596	
Refunds	£ 464,206	£ 1,116,190	£ 1,357,213	£ -	
2019/20	£ 43,402,134	£ 85,413,139	£ 100,026,752	£ 146,086,921	●

Year End Target	157,132,596	●
------------------------	--------------------	---



Description

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

Narrative

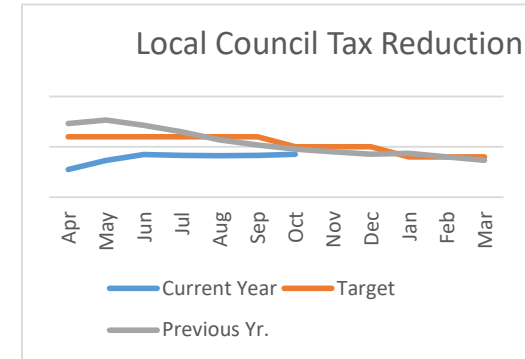
Collection is behind target by £2,523,263. The Government is funding a hardship scheme which has provided up to £150 to each LCTRS recipient of working age. Targets have been adjusted to reflect these payments. Whilst Covid has affected some customers ability to pay, we have only recently been able to start taking our normal action to recover outstanding amounts through the Magistrates Court. Also, the amount of Council Tax support awarded has increased during this financial year, reducing the amount to be collected.

Further recovery action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £63,014. Enforcement action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £394,589.

Local Council Tax Reduction

Days to process Local Council Tax Support					
	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	
2020/21	8.49	8.32	8.52	0.00	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	14.29	10.36	9.54	7.33	●

Year End Target	8	●
-----------------	---	---



Description

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

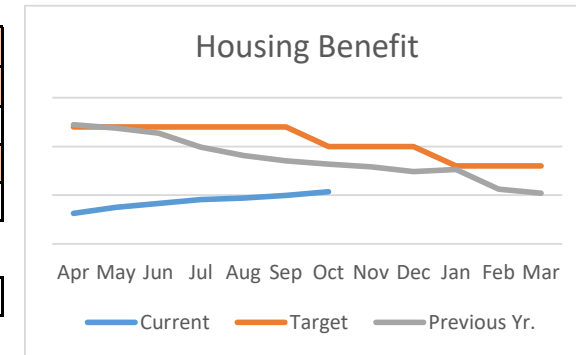
Narrative

This indicator is currently being met and is expected to achieve target at the end of the year, although an economic downturn could increase demand thereby impacting processing performance.

Housing Benefit

Days to process Housing Benefit					
	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	
2020/21	4.16	4.98	5.35	0.00	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	11.36	8.52	8.18	7.33	●

Year End Target	8	●
------------------------	----------	---



23

Description

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

Narrative

This indicator is currently being met and is expected to achieve target at the end of the year, although an economic downturn could increase demand thereby impacting processing performance.

Fraud and Compliance

Following the transfer of Housing Benefit fraud to the DWP on the 1 September 2015, the team continue to be 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 reviews of NFI SPD matches and newly awarded Single Person Discounts continue to provide very positive outcomes.

The team work closely with the East Suffolk Corporate Fraud Team and ensure the transfer of fraud referrals across the teams.

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 trying to progress closer working relationships with service areas in an attempt prevent and detect fraud and error. The team are also to review ARP matches for all partners after subscribing to the NFI Mortality Data set matches in June 2020.

The team have also assisted in due diligence checks of businesses applying for COVID 19 government grants.

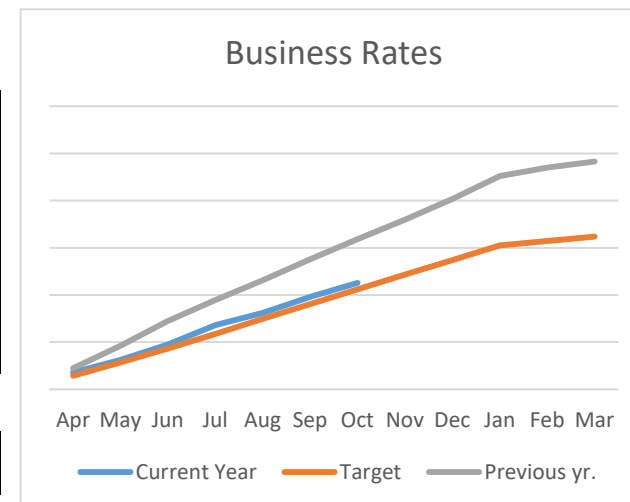
	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4
Single Person Discount Fraud	£191,318	£336,805	£382,147	£0
Local Council Tax Support	£254	£2,365	£7,215	£0
Tenancy Fraud	£0	£0	£0	£0
Other (Council Tax and NDR)	£6,353	£14,060	£14,060	£0
Fraud Identified	£197,925	£353,230	£403,423	£0

Performance Information October 2020

Business Rates

Business Rates Collection					
	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	
2020/21	£ 4,752,965	£ 9,815,866	£ 11,279,721	£ -	●
Target	£ 4,315,013	£ 9,028,512	£ 10,586,019	£ 16,182,693	
Refunds	£ 380,024	£ 767,676	£ 966,928	£ -	
2019/20	£ 7,228,152	£ 13,789,980	£ 15,902,523	£ 23,504,251	●

Year End Target	£16,182,693	●
-----------------	-------------	---



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.

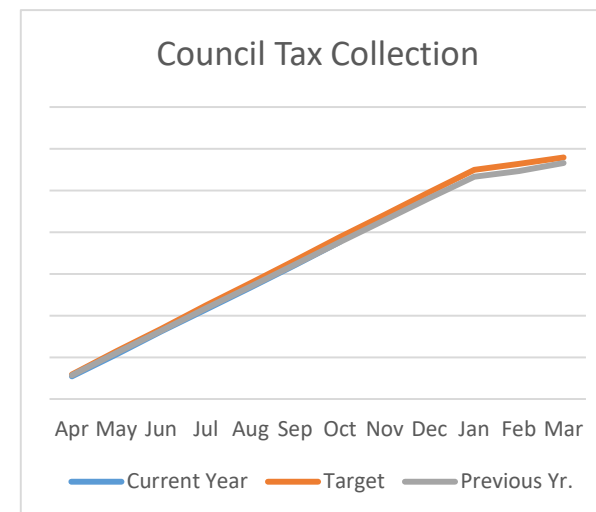
There have been claims by NHS Trusts for charitable rate relief which have been subject to a High Court appeal. If successful this could result in a backdated refund of £1.686M. The High Court have rejected the claim that the NHS Trusts are charities, however the NHS trusts are now appealing this decision.

Further recovery action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £108,648. Enforcement action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £35,335.

Council Tax

Council Tax Collection					
	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	
2020/21	£ 16,234,901	£ 32,182,036	£ 37,721,322	£ -	●
Target	£ 16,835,316	£ 33,271,032	£ 38,836,473	£ 57,913,023	
Refunds	£ 137,534	£ 395,346	£ 494,482	£ -	
2019/20	£ 16,330,949	£ 32,276,827	£ 37,676,667	£ 54,669,805	●

Year End Target	£57,913,023	●
-----------------	-------------	---



Description

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

Narrative

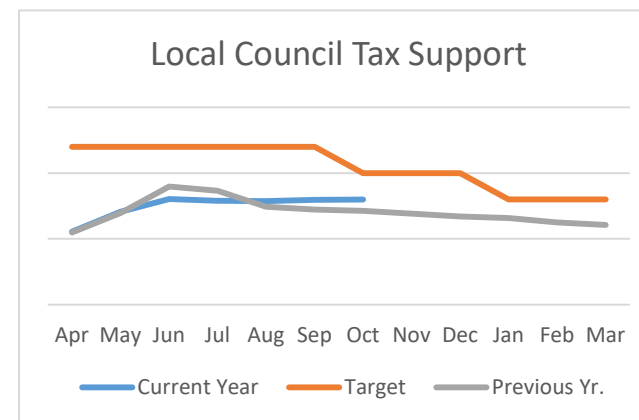
Collection is behind target by £1,115,151. The Government is funding a hardship scheme which has provided up to £150 to each LCTRS recipient of working age. Targets have been adjusted to reflect these payments. Whilst Covid has affected some customers ability to pay, we have only recently been able to take our normal action to recover outstanding amounts through the Magistrates Court. Also, the amount of Council Tax support awarded has increased during the financial year, reducing the amount to be collected.

Further recovery action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £27,103. Enforcement action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £180,962.

Charging Orders have been obtained to secure £291,509 debt.

Local Council Tax Reduction

Days to process Local Council Tax Support					
	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	
2020/21	8.03	7.98	7.99	0.00	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	8.98	7.24	7.13	6.06	●



27

Year End Target	8	●
-----------------	---	---

Description

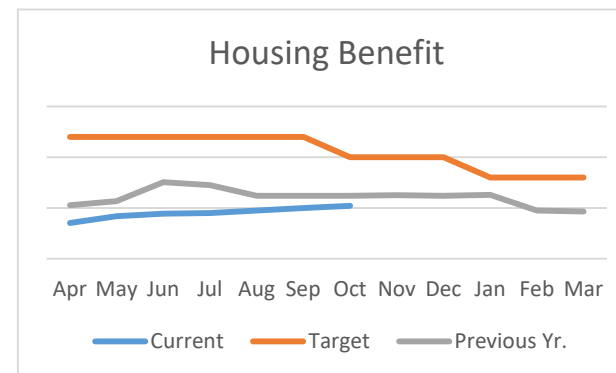
This indicator measures the average number of days to process Council Tax reduction new claims and change of circumstances.

Narrative

This indicator is currently being met and is expected to achieve target at the end of the year, although an economic downturn could increase demand thereby impacting processing performance.

Housing Benefit

Days to process Housing Benefit					
	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	
2020/21	4.43	4.98	5.21	0.00	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	7.54	6.20	6.21	4.65	●
Year End Target		8		●	



28

Description

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

Narrative

This indicator is currently being met and is expected to achieve target at the end of the year, although an economic downturn could increase demand thereby impacting processing performance.

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 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 review of newly awarded Single Person Discounts continues to provide positive outcomes.

The team are working closely with the Housing and Housing Option Team with positive results.

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 trying to progress closer working relationships with service areas in an attempt prevent and detect fraud and error.

In a broader sense the team are also working with Cambridgeshire County in setting up the Fraud Hub in Cambridgeshire. This is an attempt to match data sets across County to increase Council Tax and Business Rate income. A business case and project team is progressing the Cambridgeshire Fraud Hub.

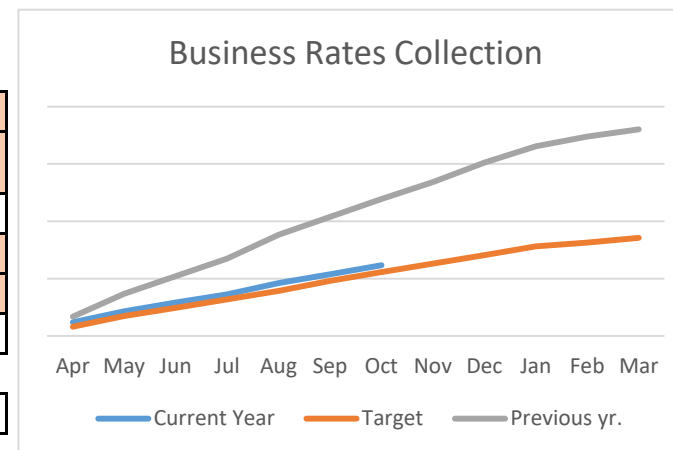
The team are also to review ARP matches for all partners after subscribing to the NFI Mortality Data set matches in June 2020.

	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4
Single Person Discount Fraud	£51,619	£99,378	£132,166	£0
Local Council Tax Support	£0	£2,145	£2,519	£0
Tenancy Fraud	£0	£0	£0	£0
Other (Council Tax and NDR)	£48,463	£93,122	£118,986	£0
Fraud Identified	£100,082	£194,644	£253,671	£0

Business Rates

Business Rates Collection					
	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	
2020/21	£ 11,674,180	£ 21,493,157	£ 24,671,530	£ -	●
Target	£ 9,836,319	£ 19,252,868	£ 22,252,040	£ 34,227,291	
Refunds	£ 887,279	£ 1,617,524	£ 1,862,537	£ -	
2019/20	£ 20,840,864	£ 41,582,956	£ 47,769,699	£ 69,587,482	●

Year End Target	34,227,291	●
-----------------	------------	---



30

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 have been subject to a High Court appeal. If successful this could result in a backdated refund of £5.2M. The High Court have rejected the claim that the NHS Trusts are charities, however the NHS trusts are now appealing this decision.

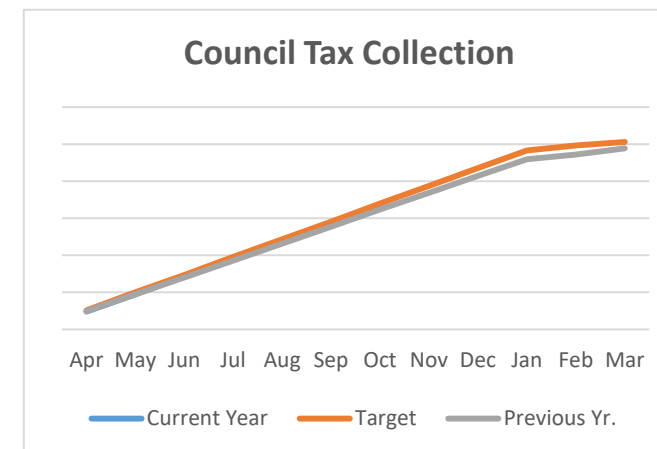
Further recovery action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £15,529. Enforcement action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £36,916.

Council Tax

Council Tax Collection					
	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	
2020/21	£ 28,542,242	£ 56,371,002	£ 66,054,256	£ -	●
Target	£ 29,393,932	£ 58,180,760	£ 67,955,127	£ 101,183,930	
Refunds	£ 281,783	£ 637,124	£ 742,308	£ -	
2019/20	£ 27,937,932	£ 55,364,351	£ 64,665,573	£ 94,467,436	●

31

Year End Target	101,183,930	●
-----------------	-------------	---



Description

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

Narrative

Collection is behind target by £1,900,871. The Government is funding a hardship scheme which has provided up to £150 to each LCTRS recipient of working age. Targets have been adjusted to reflect these payments. Whilst Covid has affected some customers ability to pay, we have only recently been able to book a Magistrates Court Hearing to obtain liability orders in January. Also, the amount of Council Tax support awarded has increased during the financial year, reducing the amount to be collected.

Further recovery action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £63,742. Enforcement action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £272,544.

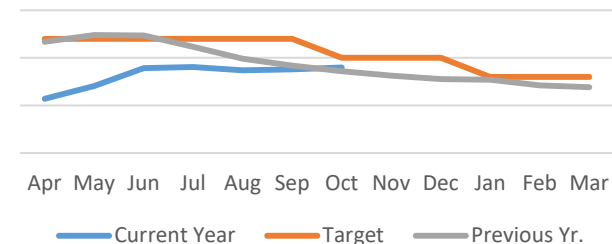
Charging Orders have been obtained to secure £469,008 debt.

Days to process Local Council Tax Support

	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	
2020/21	8.91	8.79	8.99	0.00	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	12.36	9.18	8.61	6.92	●

Year End Target	8	●
-----------------	---	---

Council Tax Support



Description

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

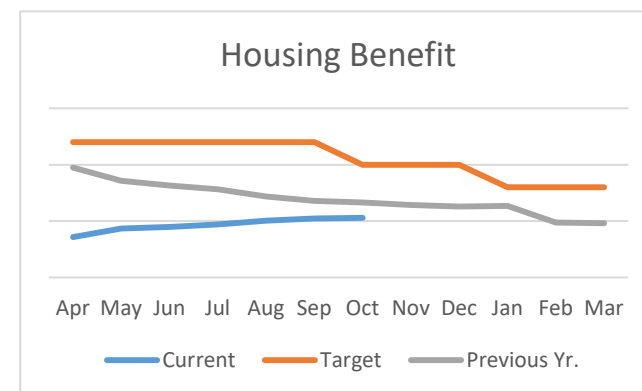
Narrative

This indicator is currently being met and is expected to achieve target at the end of the year, although an economic downturn could increase demand thereby impacting processing performance.

Housing Benefit

Days to process Housing Benefit					
	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	
2020/21	4.47	5.24	5.29	0.00	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	8.16	6.80	6.65	4.81	●

Year End Target	8	●
-----------------	---	---



Description

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

Narrative

This indicator is currently being met and is expected to achieve target at the end of the year, although an economic downturn could increase demand thereby impacting processing performance.

Fraud and Compliance

Following the transfer of Housing Benefit fraud to the DWP on the 1 September 2015, the team continue to be 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 work closely with the Housing Option Team 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. A closer working relationship with Planning Enforcement, Public Health and Housing and Economic Development has had a positive effect. The team have assisted in the identification of businesses entitled to the NDR government grant scheme. The team are also to review ARP matches for all partners after subscribing to the NFI Mortality Data set matches in June 2020.

	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4
Single Person Discount Fraud	£140,444	£229,857	£246,017	£0
Local Council Tax Support	£2,327	£7,405	£15,784	£0
Tenancy Fraud	£6,480	£12,960	£12,960	£0
Other (Council Tax and NDR)	£5,177	£27,227	£27,227	£0
Fraud Identified	£154,428	£277,449	£301,988	£0

Service Updates as at October 2020



Enforcement

All Enforcement visits were suspended from 23 March 2020 until 24 August 2020, however since then we have resumed visits and the amounts collected by the team have risen although not yet back to the levels we saw last year. In the recent lockdown we were not required to cease visits and therefore have continued as previously with all the necessary personal protective equipment and risk assessment in place. We continue to try and engage with customers offering long term payment arrangements and assisting customers where possible. The team has also recently taken on the collection of parking fines for East and West Suffolk

This year we have collected £1.996M compared to £3.016M at the same point last year.



Further Recovery

With effect from March 2020 all recovery actions were temporarily suspended until the summer and therefore the amount collected through these actions has been less than in the last financial year. Income of £340K in total has been received compared to £791K at the same point last year. We have £1.925 M debt secured through Charging Orders.

Funding has been secured from Norfolk County Council for the forthcoming financial year in respect of this work and we have approached Suffolk County Council to continue funding beyond March 2021. Fenland District Council and East Cambridgeshire District Council are also contributing to allow this work to be carried out for all ARP partners.

Non-Domestic Rates

The team had an increased workload over the first two months of this year due to the additional rate reliefs to be awarded and the payment of grants to businesses. This saw extremely high levels of telephone calls and correspondence, however the team has worked hard to bring the outstanding work down to normal levels. A new set of business grants was announced for the recent lockdown and this will again increase the volume of work for the team. Our website has been updated with the latest information on grants available.

The revaluation planned to take place on 1 April 2021 has been postponed until 1 April 2023 with an antecedent date of 1 April 2021 (this is the date that the valuations are based on).

A bill to implement rate relief for public lavatories is currently before Parliament and it is intended to have a retrospective effect for 2020/21

Council Tax

As expected Covid -19 has had an impact on collection during April and May but we expect the application of the hardship fund payments to accounts during July to significantly offset this and we will have a clearer picture of collection against target at that point. We have updated our website and phone message to provide help and support to those struggling to pay through this difficult time and are signposting customers to claim Universal Credit and Council Tax Support.

We have offered the option of a two month payment break to provide more flexibility during Covid-19. An online form has been implemented to allow customers to request a 2 month payment break, a change from 10 to 12 instalments or a change of payment date. To date we have received over 1600 completed forms and the fraud and enforcement teams have helped us process these requests in a timely manner.

We have sent 2 rounds of 'soft reminders' which have had a positive effect on collection. The reminders have signposted customers to the flexible payment form and other help available from the Council, DWP and other outside agencies and we have ensured that direct debit payments have not been collected where a hardship payment is due and the account balance is £150 or less.

The first Statutory Reminders were issued in August for customers in arrears for 2019/20 and behind by three instalments or more for the current year. The Magistrates Courts have now re-opened and have stayed open during the latest lockdown. We have Court Hearings booked for all authorities.

Throughput for council tax billing is up 26% on last year overall and now that the lockdown restrictions are gradually lifting we have seen an increase in the number of moves reported to almost the same level as the same period last year. We have remained in a great position workwise with outstanding work being well below the level it was at the same point last year. This is a direct result of the project to introduce Generic Council Tax Billing Officer which provide a resilient team who have been able to switch between billing and benefits to help cope with ever changing work loads and priorities during the pandemic, although we are seeing increased demand due to the buoyant housing market with moves at very high levels. We are prioritising moves and have a plan in place to recover the position. Being up to date and having the tiered phone messages in place has helped us maintain a level of 47% fewer phone calls during May as compared to last year and achieve a handling rate of 99.01% in billing.

Benefits

Whilst both Council Tax Support and Benefits performance is presently achieving targets, despite the increased demand attributed to COVID-19. There is a risk the second COVID-19 lockdown that started on the 5th November 2020 COVID-19 could cause a prolonged economic downturn with potentially significant increases in unemployment and claims. We continue to see significant increases in claims and throughput overall for benefits has been approximately a third up on 2019/20.

In April we changed the Local Council Tax Support schemes for all partners to include a 'tolerance rule' which is applied to monthly Universal Credit Data Share (UCDS) records from DWP. The new rule means that changes in Universal Credit of under £15.00 per week are ignored by the Capita system and are automatically processed. We currently receive an average of just under 4000 UCDS records from the DWP per week and we fully automate around 53% of these. The introduction of the tolerance rule has reduced the number of Council Tax Support re-assessments resulting from DWP UCDS records by 32%, which is in line with the results of modelling undertaken during consultation. This in turn has reduced the number of Council Tax adjustment notices, and refund request and allows customers to manage their payments easier.

The Council Tax Support Hardship Fund awards were issued to every qualifying working age customer by the end of July 2020, either by a credit of up to £150 on to their Council Tax account or by arranging a refund where one is due. We are monitoring expenditure given the rise in caseload due to COVID-19 to identify risk that the fund will exhaust prior to the end of the year. Representations continue to be made to HMCLG that the fund will not support awards to every customer.

Since the end of September we have worked with the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) to implement the COVID-19 Track & Trace Self Isolation payment scheme. This scheme pays £500 to each person notified of a requirement to self isolate who meets the eligibility criteria, namely receiving specified Benefits, who cannot work from home and has a loss of income/is on a low income. We achieved the scheme launch of 12th October 2020, despite having to quickly design and configure an application form. Whilst DHSC fund the programme, we are seeing demand outstrip the forecast volumes and anticipate demand to exponentially increase throughout Winter, as the number of persons required to self isolate increases.



ARP Systems and Digital

There continues to be a significant increase in activity on the ARP website by up to 60% compared to the 2019 year, due to the effect of the Covid Pandemic with all the ARP offices being closed for face to face visits and only offered for priority customers.

The ARP Technical Team Manager, Paula Fry, continues work with Capita to develop the requirements expected of a modern self-service option and has set up weekly meetings between ARP and Capita to progress and resolve outstanding helpdesk calls. A more collaborative relationship with Capita has been demonstrated recently with the implementation of Total Mobile Software to aid the visiting officers in their work.

In the run up to Christmas and in conjunction with West Suffolk ICT, Paula Fry will be leading on the mandatory upgrade of the Capita platform for all five partners' databases, to be in place by December 31st in readiness for the annual billing project, starting with the test phase in from January 2021.

Fraud and Compliance

The Fraud team this month are pleased to confirm this month of a successful prosecution regarding tenancy fraud. The tenant was found guilty of subletting a Housing Association property and sentenced to 12 weeks, suspended for 2 years.

With new restrictions in place by Central Government, currently scheduled to end on December 2nd, in response to the increased cases of Covid-19 infections the fraud team are reviewing the work of the visiting officers, in order to comply with current Government guidance. The team have carried out a full risk assessment which has enabled procedures and protocols for the visiting officers to be put in place, along with the supply of relevant Personal Protective Equipment for visits. Desk based Fraud and Compliance work continues as usual, with all of the Fraud Team able to fully work from home.

Following discussions with East Camb's DC and Fenland DC, Katey Mills (ARP Assistant Fraud Manager) presented a business case to extend the Fraud and Compliance work for the two partners. If approved this would align the Fraud and Compliance work currently being carried out for other partners of the Anglia Revenues Partnership as indicated in the fraud savings on the quarterly performance report. This work has consistently seen savings outweighing the costs of the work in the areas of Local Council Tax Reduction and Single Person Discounts particularly, over a number of years.

Norfolk County Council have committed to continue providing funding until March 2022. Suffolk County Council until March 2021 and are being asked to continue funding into 2021/22. Norfolk County Council have additionally funded a Premium review of Single Person Discounts for both Breckland District Council and Norwich City Council for 2020/2021 with matches against a number of additional data sets held within the National Fraud Initiative (NFI). The results from the 2019/2020 Breckland Council Premium matches exceeded expectations.

During the pandemic it is not possible to interview customers under caution on a face to face basis. Advice has been taken from the Law Society and the Crown Prosecution Service in relation to alternative methods of interviewing under caution. With assistance from the solicitor used for ARP Fraud prosecutions it has been agreed that customers will be interviewed by letter and a process and procedure has been set up to enable this.

With the ARP Management arrangement with Norwich City Council it continues to allow us to employ an additional resource fully funded by Norwich City Council and Norfolk County Council, to undertake Single Person Discount Reviews and Council Tax Support investigations for Norwich.

Breckland Council and Norwich City Council are also part of the Norfolk Fraud Hub. As previously mentioned, the Fraud Hub is fully funded by Norfolk County Council and is now matching additional data sets from all authorities to identify Fraud and Error across the county. The Fraud Team to continue to work alongside Norfolk County on this project and are also in the process of reviewing results.

Better Customer Journeys Programme

While several projects have taken a 'back seat' due to Covid-19 contingency response, many have actually been catalysed by the crisis. The updates above on Council Tax and Benefits talk in more detail about the outcomes, all of which directly support families, communities and businesses by supporting uplifts in capacity and speed of response.

Through the Better Customer Journeys Programme, ARP is identifying how to build on the major increases in ARP website visits and Self-Service usage. 28 August was the first meeting of ARP's customer strategy team since February, when the partners' customer service heads will begin to map out how best ARP can support customer service teams' new, emerging operating models.

The ARP's customer strategy team are currently completing a gap analysis, and a set of plans for closing that gap. For example, we will discuss how best to capitalise on increased online activity and interest and make sure our communications with customers are pointing that way (allowing more opportunity to support traditional channels for people who need them).

Since April, we've met every week with Capita One's Digital product and helpdesk teams. These sessions work alongside the design workshops touched on last quarter to keep the pressure on Capita and ensure the partnership can deliver on its self-service aspirations.

In a separate but related strand, ARP is developing its change delivery and project management capabilities, which apply to Better Customer Journeys projects, the Performance Framework Programme, further automation, and other standalone projects. Most of the management team have now been through project management training, and we are increasing our use of the new Change Delivery Framework.

BRECKLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

Report of: Maxine O'Mahony, Executive Director Strategy & Governance

To: ARP Joint Committee, 8 December 2020

Author: Alison Chubbock, Chief Accountant

Subject: ARP Forecast Financial Performance

Purpose: To provide information on the forecast full year financial position against budget for the ARP

Recommendation(s):

- 1) That the report and appendix be noted

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 Each of the partner Councils provides forecast full year financial information against budget for the ARP. The information is collated to provide an overall financial performance report, to provide information to Joint Committee on the progress against budget. This report is based on information as of 31 October 2020 and all costs are included and shared based on the Partnership agreement.

1.2 The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant effect on the ability for ARP to generate income from the enforcement service. The forecast presented in this report assumes that the level of enforcement work is back to budgeted expectations for November onwards, but this is dependent on the courts reopening in December and a risk therefore remains that the income forecast may change.

The forecast at this stage of the year shows an overspend against budget of £522k for the whole of the ARP and this is shown further in Appendix A along with details of the variances.

1.3 Appendix A also provides details on the remaining transformation funding which was set aside in previous years from below budget spend and grant funding. £66k is earmarked for projects in progress this year and there is a further £93k available for future transformation projects.

The appendix also provides detail on the values held and earmarked in the ICT reserve, which was introduced to smooth the financial effects of major ICT spend.

1.4 Based on the current forecast variance each authority will be invoiced for their respective amounts at year end taking into account directly incurred costs and income compared to the share of the out-turn.

All authorities have directly received new burdens funding from Government to cover the costs of administering the Covid-19 grant schemes. It has been agreed that these grants are retained directly by each authority and will help to offset the overspend within ARP. These grants may have been used by each authority to cover additional resource costs for administering the schemes internally.

In addition, Government are providing grants to individual local authorities to offset the losses from sales fees and charges income. Authorities are expected to absorb the initial 5% of lost income against budget and after that the grant will provide 75p in every £ of lost income. The lost Enforcement income will be claimed under this scheme for each partner.

The table below shows the share of the ARP overspend alongside the Covid-19 administration grants and income compensation expected to be retained by each authority.

	ARP Over spend	Enforcement Income claim
Breckland	£81k	(£73k)
East Cambs	£36k	(£34k)
East Suffolk	£214k	(£177k)
Fenland	£86k	(£71k)
West Suffolk	£105k	(£94k)
TOTAL	£522k	(£449k)

The variation in cost share reflects that the main overspend is from lost enforcement income and the percentage shares for this area are based on the enforcement caseloads as per the ARP agreement.

2.0 OPTIONS

2.1 That the report and appendices are noted.

3.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

3.1 To provide Members information on the financial position against budget for the whole of the ARP.

4.0 EXPECTED BENEFITS

4.1 To provide Members information on the financial position against budget for the whole of the ARP.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

In preparing this report, the report author has considered the likely implications of the decision - particularly in terms of Carbon Footprint / Environmental Issues; Constitutional & Legal; Contracts; Corporate Priorities; Crime & Disorder; Equality & Diversity/Human Rights; Financial; Health & Wellbeing; Reputation; Risk Management; Safeguarding; Staffing; Stakeholders/Consultation/Timescales; Transformation Programme; Other. Where the report author considers that there may be implications under one or more of these headings, these are identified below.

5.2 Financial

5.2.1 This report is financial in nature and financial information is included within the report and appendices.

5.2 Stakeholders / Consultation / Timescales

5.12.1 Accountants at the partner Councils have been consulted on their financial forecasts.

6.0 WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED

6.1 N/A

7.0 ACRONYMS

7.1 ARP – Anglia Revenues Partnership

7.2 JC – Joint Committee

Background papers:- [See The Committee Report Guide for guidance on how to complete this section](#)

Lead Contact Officer

Name and Post: Alison Chubbock, Chief Accountant

Telephone Number: 01362 656865

Email: alison.chubbock@breckland.gov.uk

Key Decision: No

Exempt Decision: No

This report refers to a Mandatory & Discretionary Services

Appendices attached to this report:

Appendix A Financial performance report

Anglia Revenues Partnership Joint Committee

Forecast Full Year Financial Performance as at 31st October 2020

Description	Approved Budget 2020/21 £	Forecast Actuals 2020/21 £	Forecast Variance Over/(Under) £	Variance %	Notes
Employee Related Costs	9,501,073	9,357,002	(144,071)	(1.52)	1
Premises Related Costs	285,440	282,146	(3,294)	(1.15)	
Transport Related Costs	149,856	113,596	(36,260)	(24.20)	2
Supplies & Services	1,808,119	1,802,832	(5,287)	(0.29)	
Support Services	555,000	516,726	(38,274)	(6.90)	3
Income	(2,490,695)	(1,741,055)	749,640	(30.10)	4
TOTAL PARTNERSHIP COSTS	9,808,793	10,331,247	522,454	5.33	5

Variance Notes

1. The under spend is due to an adjustment for pension contributions for one authority. It is expected there will be a further reduction in this area, a full review of this will be looked at for Q3. There is also a small underspend due to vacancies.
2. The under spend is due to meetings being carried out by microsoft teams, suspension of visiting officers work and officers working from home.
3. More use of the digital Critiqom service has resulted in the underspend in the budget for franked mail.
4. The shortfall in income is due to less Enforcement work carried out over the 7 month period due to the current situation. The forecasted outturn assumes that the level of work will be back to budgeted expectations for November, December and Q4. It is assumed the enforcement agents visits will continue and courts will take place. A full review of income will be looked at for Q3.
5. Each council has received grants from government to cover extra burden placed on the business rate team to award business grants due to Covid. These grants will be retained by each council and will not offset the partnership overspend.

Transformation funding - committed expenditure as follows:

Description	Approved Budget 2020/21 £	Forecast Actuals 2021/22 £	Forecast Actuals 2022/23 £
Already committed from grant funding received last year			
Mitel Join Up	35,000	0	0
HR Business support	15,409	0	0
Fines officer	16,000	0	0
Total	66,409	0	0
Unallocated	93,100	0	0
Grand Total	159,509	0	0

The committed transformation funding is £66,409. It is expected that the budget will be spent by the end of the year. If all of the identified expenditure goes through in 2020/21 there will be £93,100 remaining for future projects.

43

Bailiff income to be reclaimed	2020/21
Breckland	(72,682)
East Cambs	(34,234)
East Suffolk	(177,089)
Fenland	(70,916)
West suffolk	(93,656)
	(448,578)

ICT Reserve	Approved Budget 2020/21 £	Approved Budget 2021/22 £	Approved Budget 2022/23 £
Opening Balance	88,700	22,701	22,701
Partnership contribution	72,500	72,500	72,500
Earmarked - ICT refresh replacement servers software element and kit for working from home	(138,499)	(72,500)	(72,500)
	22,701	22,701	22,701

BRECKLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

Report of: Maxine O'Mahony, Executive Director Strategy & Governance

To: ARP Joint Committee, 8 December 2020

Author: Alison Chubbock, Chief Accountant

Subject: ARP Joint Committee Partnership Budget

Purpose: To set the annual budgets relevant to the Joint Committee for 2021-22 and to provide indicative budget values for future years.

Recommendation(s):

- 1) That the partnership budget at Appendix A for 2021-22 be approved.

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 Each year a budget is prepared for the ARP Joint Committee. Working papers are prepared by the service accountants at each authority in conjunction with the ARP Management team and these are reviewed by OIB before being brought to the Joint Committee for formal approval. Approval is sought from the ARP JC in December to allow time for the ARP budgets to be incorporated into the 5 partners' individual budgets for their own budget setting. The budgets cover the costs and income for providing Council Tax, Housing Benefit payments, Non-Domestic Rates collection and the Enforcement service for the five partners.

1.2 Benefits payments and subsidies, court fee income and other grants specific to the individual authorities are not included within the partnership budgets, as these are the direct responsibility of the individual authority and will be reflected in their direct budgets.

Budget

1.3 Appendix A sets out the proposed budget for 2021-22 compared to the current year, with indicative budgets for the following two years. Further tables show the share of costs for each authority and the proportion that any additional costs or savings against the budget will be shared. The proportionate share of costs has remained fairly constant since last year, the main change has been in the Enforcement area where East Suffolk has seen a decrease in their liability orders (last year was an increase) and therefore receive a lower share of the Enforcement income, whilst the other partners have seen an increase in liability orders.

1.4 The budgets have been set using the same principles as previous years and the current approved establishment staffing levels.

When the budget was set last year an efficiency target of £120k was included to be achieved from 2021-22 and this has been achieved through the customer experience work. This year a further target of £220k has been included to be achieved from 2022-23 onwards through completion of succession planning work. In addition, increased income (and associated costs) has been included in this budget for the new parking enforcement work which will commence in 2020-21. The net benefit of this is budgeted at £249k per year.

In setting the budget the following key assumptions have been made:

- A pay award of 2% each year
- A vacancy factor of 2.5% in all years
- No inflation on general non-contracted supplies and services

At the time of submitting this report the budget had been based on the 2% pay award, however the Spending Review on 25 November announced a public sector pay freeze for all apart from those earning £24,000 or less. The partner authorities are undertaking work on the impact of this and an update will be provided at the Joint Committee meeting.

1.5 The overall budget shows a decrease of £151k when compared to 2020-21. Behind this value are:

- Increased salary costs because of annual pay increases, salary increments and Living Wage pressures.
- Reduced travel costs and allowances through increased home working.
- Un-avoidable inflationary increases on contracts (i.e. software and licences).
- Additional income from expansion of the enforcement service to include parking enforcement.
- A reduction in the 3 partners costs share of £57k as a result of HR services being moved back in house (with the associated costs being moved to individual authority budgets).

1.6 Budget setting is extremely difficult in the current circumstances and this budget has been set on the assumption that services will continue 'as normal' in the future. It does not make any allowance for additional resource or resource re-allocation which could be needed at short notice (for example Covid-19 business grants, Self-isolation grants, etc).

The enforcement income totalling £1.9m continues to be an area of risk, this budget assumes that income is able to be collected as it has been historically and also assumes a likelihood of increase in cases from external partners as previously planned.

2.0 **OPTIONS**

2.1 That the partnership budget at Appendix A for 2021-22 be approved.

2.2 Make changes to the partnership budget before approving.

3.0 **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)**

3.1 These budgets will enable ARP to continue its strategic focus moving forwards and will form the basis for monitoring financial performance in next financial year. The contributions form part of the individual partner's base budgets.

4.0 **EXPECTED BENEFITS**

4.1 By setting these budgets the partner authorities are able to use the approved values to set their own budgets and we have a basis for monitoring financial performance next year.

5.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

In preparing this report, the report author has considered the likely implications of the decision - particularly in terms of Carbon Footprint / Environmental Issues; Constitutional & Legal; Contracts; Corporate Priorities; Crime & Disorder; Data Protection; Equality & Diversity/Human Rights; Financial; Health & Wellbeing; Reputation; Risk

Management; Safeguarding; Staffing; Stakeholders/Consultation/Timescales; Other. Where the report author considers that there may be implications under one or more of these headings, these are identified below.

5.2 Constitution & Legal

5.2.1 The ARP Joint Committee is required to approve the budget each year.

5.5 Financial

5.5.1 Financial information is included within the appendix.

5.6 Staffing

5.3.1 The budget has been prepared based on the current approved establishment.

5.7 Stakeholders / Consultation / Timescales

5.7.1 The budget approved at this meeting runs from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022, with future years given as indicative values only.

5.7.2 Partner authorities accountants have provided the financial information for their own authorities which has been collated to form this budget.

6.0 WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED

6.1 N/A.

7.0 ACRONYMS

7.1 ARP – Anglia Revenues Partnership.

Background papers:-

Lead Contact Officer

Name and Post:	Alison Chubbock, Chief Accountant and Paul Corney, Head of ARP
Telephone Number:	01362 656865 / 01842 756437
Email:	alison.chubbock@breckland.gov.uk / paul.corney@angliarevenues.gov.uk

Key Decision: No

Exempt Decision: No

This report refers to Mandatory and Discretionary Services

Appendices attached to this report:

Appendix A	ARP Budgets
------------	-------------

Anglia Revenues Partnership Joint Committee
2021-22 Budget Setting Summary

<i>Description</i>	<i>2020-21 Budget £</i>	<i>2021-22 Budget £</i>	<i>2022-23 Indicative Budget £</i>	<i>2023-24 Indicative Budget £</i>
Employee Costs	9,485,073	9,709,164	9,890,893	10,165,657
Premises Costs	285,440	275,886	282,774	290,676
Transport Costs	149,856	103,805	104,947	106,107
Supplies & Services	1,742,120	1,803,711	1,840,144	1,881,271
Support Services	555,000	495,228	502,585	510,091
Income	(2,408,696)	(2,729,913)	(2,718,103)	(2,706,819)
TOTAL PARTNERSHIP COSTS	9,808,793	9,657,881	9,903,239	10,246,983

Analysis of Total Partner Contributions

	<i>2020-21 Budget £</i>	<i>2021-22 Budget £</i>	<i>2022-23 Indicative Budget £</i>	<i>2023-24 Indicative Budget £</i>
Breckland Council	1,960,625	1,910,305	1,956,814	2,020,993
East Cambridgeshire Council	1,121,411	1,075,225	1,101,750	1,139,004
Fenland District Council	1,255,239	1,224,589	1,257,656	1,303,403
West Suffolk	2,378,288	2,300,106	2,358,773	2,440,108
East Suffolk	3,093,231	3,147,656	3,228,247	3,343,475
	9,808,793	9,657,881	9,903,239	10,246,983

Analysis of Partner Gain Share Percentages 2021-22

	<i>5 Partners %</i>	<i>3 Partners %</i>	<i>Enforcement %</i>
Breckland Council	17.91%	34.91%	19.17%
East Cambridgeshire Council	10.59%	20.63%	8.80%
Fenland District Council	13.51%	0.00%	17.63%
West Suffolk	22.81%	44.46%	22.94%
East Suffolk	35.18%	0.00%	31.46%
	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

ANGLIA REVENUES PARTNERSHIP

Report of Paul Corney - Head of ARP

To: ARP Joint Committee, 11 December 2020

Subject: The Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP) Service Delivery Plan.

Purpose: To recommend the Service Delivery Plan and Risk Register at Appendix B are approved and to report on the progress in respect of the December 2019 Service Delivery Plan (Appendix A).

Recommendation(s):

- That the progress in respect of the December 2019 Service Delivery Plan is noted.
- That the ARP Joint Committee approve the revised Service Delivery Plan and risk register at Appendix B

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 In accordance with the ARP agreement a revised Service Delivery Plan should be agreed by the Joint Committee by the end of December each year and the risk register is reviewed every 6 months.
- 1.1.2 A Service Delivery Plan was agreed in December 2019 and there is an update below which details progress against this plan.
- 1.1.3 In addition to service aims and objectives the plan includes a risk assessment that ARP will implement in the next year.

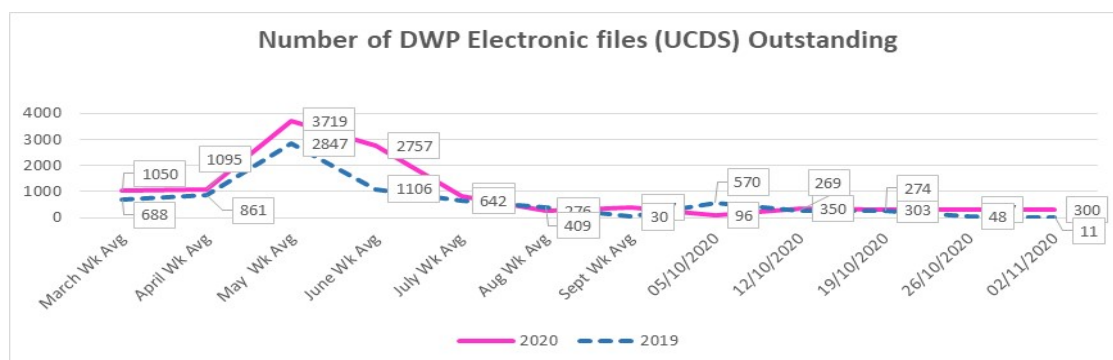
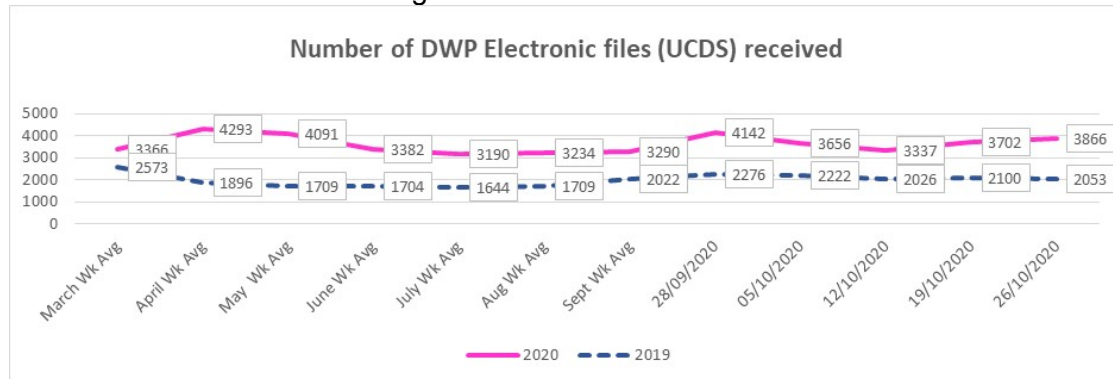
2. December 2019/20 plan update and the impact of Covid

- 2.1 The ARP has seen significant success in 2019/20 and we have achieved the following;
 - Housing Benefit new claims and changes are meeting targets in 20/21 even though Covid has affected level of work and enquiries
 - The suite of forms and other functionality is available to all customer teams using Capita customer contact software to sign customers up to e-services and the number of those using e-services continues to rise.
 - The further recovery work jointly funded by County Councils secured recovery of over £1.36 Million last year but covid leading to suspension of courts has reduced the recovery in 2020/21 although, as at the end of October the further recovery officers have already secured over £340k which is commendable considering the circumstances.
 - The Fraud teams work, also jointly funded by the County Councils, identified over £2.4 Million in fraud and error last year. Even with the restrictions caused by Covid the team are on target to achieve similar values in 20/21.
 - The East and West Suffolk merged databases were in place from April 2019 and the project to merge them was a great success meaning that performance was still maintained within target in all areas
 - The success of the Enforcement Team continues, from the end of 2020/21 East and West Suffolk parking debts will be passed to the ARP Enforcement Team and so the fee income shared by the partners will increase in 2021/22

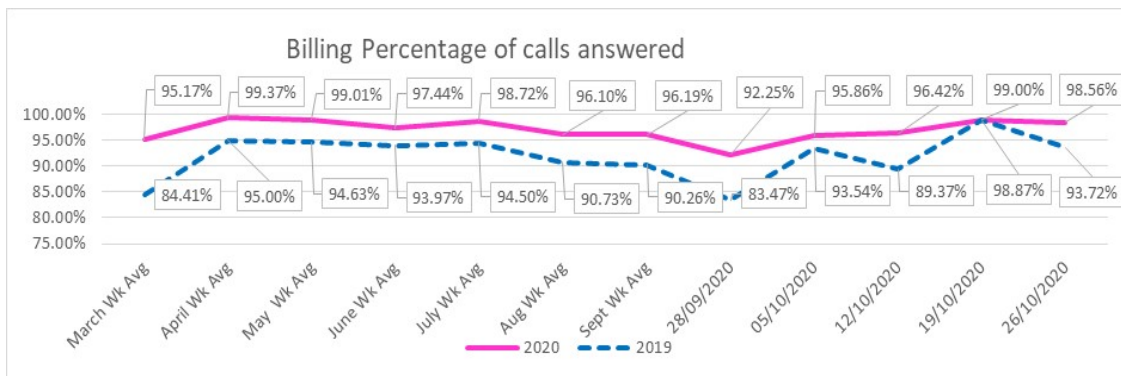
Some other achievements relating to the Transformation Programme are detailed below:

- 2.2 The Digital work stream has progressed with the automation of new claims and changes in circumstances growing steadily, to such a degree that when we saw the significant increase in Universal Credit Data Service reports of changes in circumstances we were able to automate approximately 50% resulting in less build up in work outstanding and therefore a quicker response for customers.

UCDS received and outstanding



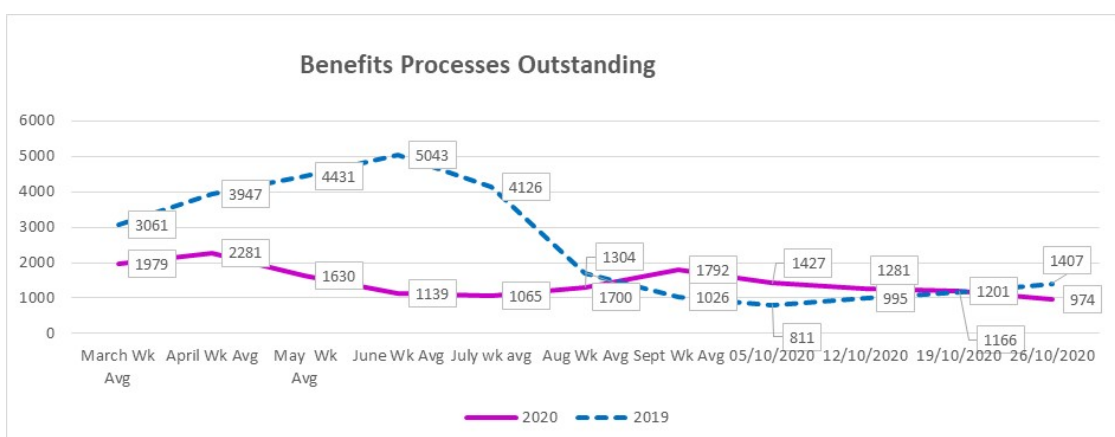
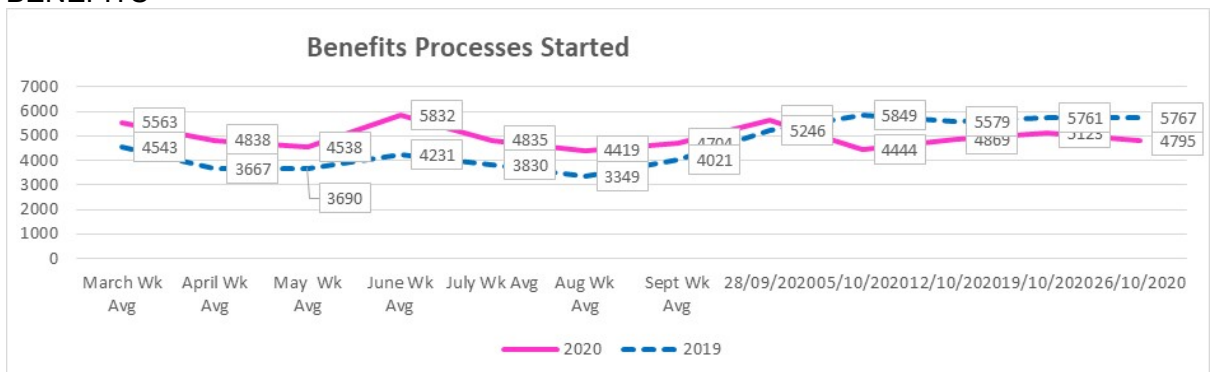
- 2.3 Automation of Universal Credit records also includes the introduction of the “Tolerance Rule” into our Council Tax Support Schemes last year, this has meant that approximately one 3rd of the changes in income received did not result in a revised bill and payment profile for our customers leading to a clearer picture of what they have to pay. We did not have any cases where we need to reassess due to the tolerance rule causing hardship in cases where income reduced.
- 2.4 In December 2019 it was clear that too many calls to the ARP were unanswered and that the time customers were waiting to get through was too long. Processing times for some Council Tax changes was also taking 8 weeks or more to deal with.
- 2.5 High staff turnover (partly due to the number of temporary appointments funded by DWP and others) meant that the number of new staff with less experience and knowledge were being trained and so the experienced staff were taking calls and we were unable to clear some Council tax work within acceptable timescales.
- 2.6 In March 2019, before new year bills were issued, new phone technology was introduced (RAD messages) that allows the ARP to manage calls so that the simpler calls go to our less experienced staff and customers are offered online services as an alternative to needing to speak to an officer. The improvement in performance has continued in 19/20 and 20/21 as shown by the graphs below



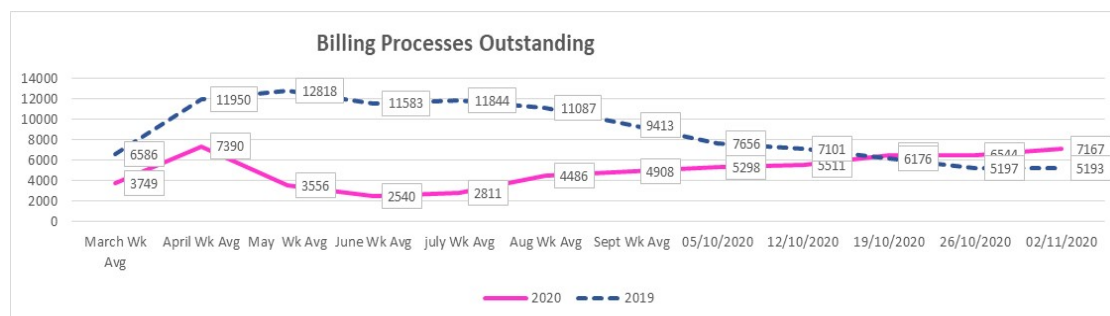
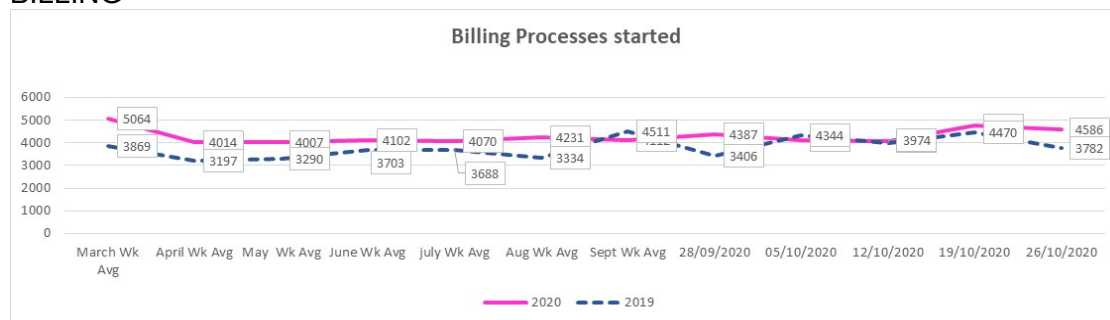
2.7 A number of temporary posts were made permanent and appointments made. These staff have since been trained and we have seen the outstanding work reduce so that now all Council Tax Billing enquiries are being responded to much more quickly and the work in progress at peak times was less than half of the amount we had at the same time in 19/20. The impact of the Self-Isolation Payments and other covid related fluctuations in the workload has led to an increase in the amount currently outstanding but measures are in place to monitor and manage the situation.

2.8 The generic role called a Council Tax Billing Officer was introduced last year and is a great success. These posts process Council Tax changes and certain types of Council Tax Support (CTS) cases (where there is no Housing Benefit). This role means that resource is more flexible and can be moved from CTS to billing as the workload demands.

BENEFITS

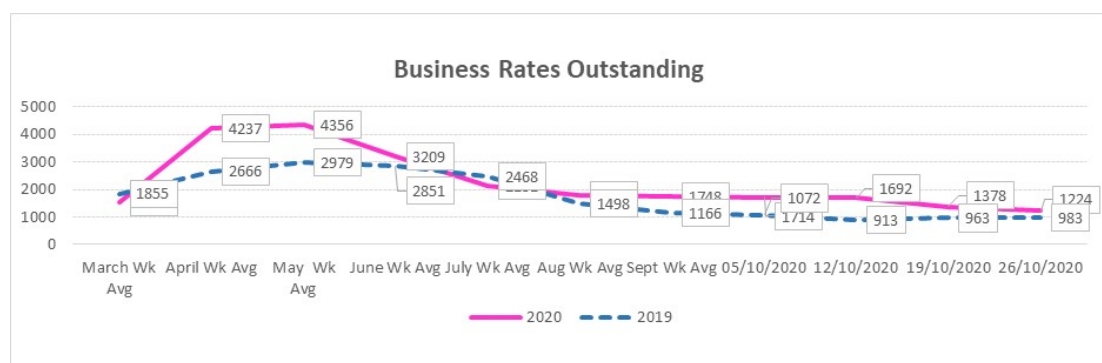
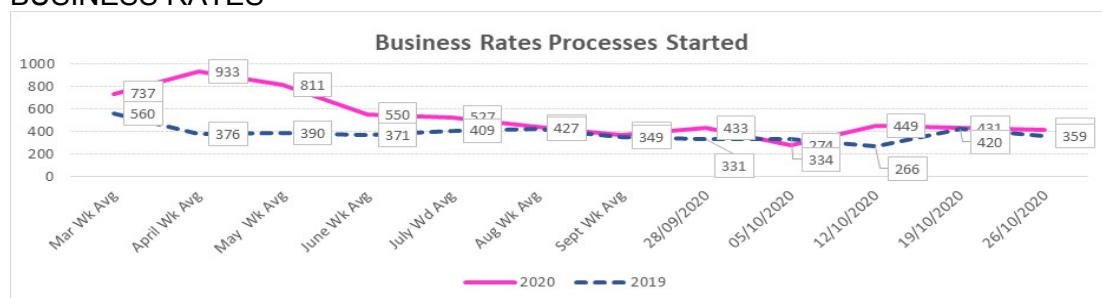


BILLING



- 2.9 On the 1st April 2017 the shared management arrangement with Norwich City commenced and has been very successful to date. Partnership arrangements have been extended to include the provision of fraud services for Norwich (jointly funded by Norfolk County Council)
- 2.10 Norwich have delegated their enforcement services (previously known as Bailiff) to Breckland Council from July 2019 who pass this work to the ARP team. This increases the teams resilience and ability to collect debt in a fair manner taking account of people's ability to pay and vulnerability.
- 2.11 Covid has of course had a significant impact on services as discussed in the report at the Joint Committee in September 2020 and the graphs show the volumes of work for Business Rates and the amounts outstanding at each point since March 2020

BUSINESS RATES



- 2.12 With Self-isolation Payments introduced and business grants being offered in the second lockdown in place in November we will see more pressure on the teams. However, the partnership working between teams across all councils and the ARP Teams has worked fantastically and it should be a priority, when the current crisis ends, to ensure that we continue to work as closely in future.
- 2.13 Appendix A attached to the report shows the status of the priorities agreed in December 2019 and as can be seen those actions that have not progressed, as we would have anticipated, have been delayed by Covid requirements.
- 2.14 Even though we have seen an increase in workload in 2019/20 and into 2020/21, we have introduced automation and other efficiencies that have led to a reduction in complement of 9 posts (net 7 posts as 2 bailiff posts have been added to process parking work) saving £288k.
- 2.15 The draft budget for 2021/22 is lower than it was in 20/21 even after the 2.75% increase in salaries; due to the savings in salaries and in the increased income from bailiff work now that the enforcement team will collect parking debts for East and West Suffolk.

3. Revised Service Delivery Plan and Risk Register

- 3.1 The service Delivery Plan (Appendix B) details the high-level actions that the service must implement to ensure that the varied demands on the service are met. The plan has 2 areas:
- Service plan – business as usual and innovative activities
 - Risk matrix
- 3.2 The Joint Committee has reconsidered the strategic direction of the ARP going forward and the Service Delivery Plan seeks to detail actions to achieve the visioning detailed in the report to members.
- 3.3 The priorities of the Revenues and Benefits service are:
- “Colleagues”:** Our operations rely on the people who make up our team, both directly within the partnership and in partner service areas. We will develop our people professionally and pursue a comprehensive organisational development plan.
- “Customers”:** We focus all of our work on supporting the families, communities, individuals and businesses located in our partnership area. We will continue to make our services as convenient and as accessible as possible.
- “Digital”:** We will aim to increase our ‘digital by default’ service including full self-service. We will use automation to speed processing and release our teams to focus on vulnerable and complex cases.
- “Relationships”:** We are a partnership of five district councils, pooling resources to share the provision of revenues and benefits services, offering greater returns on investment in change and innovation projects.
- “Sustainability”:** We are organisationally designed to improve the financial sustainability and self-sufficiency of our partners, through the collection of council tax and business rates and the ethical recovery and enforcement of related debts.
- 3.4 All partner Councils strategies include the development of digital online solutions. Self-service offers customers accessible services inside and outside of opening hours, it also means that the customer service teams are available to provide more help to those who cannot self-serve or need to speak to a specialist.
- 3.5 The offer of online facilities to customers able to self-serve also frees existing resource to help those unable to self-serve. The development of the online portal, forms and automation will continue to be a priority.

- 3.6 The Customer Strategic Team (the lead officer from each Councils customer services team and ARP officers) will continue to improve the access customers have to services and will continue to improve the interface between front and back office functions.
- 3.7 In 2021/22 we will continue to invest time and resource into developing automated processes which have already delivered savings of over £120k. In addition, a further £220k efficiency target is included in the budget from 2022/23 onwards.
- 3.8 The ARP strategic team will continue to influence national initiatives such as Universal Credit and to influence system design to improve performance and generate efficiencies where possible.
- 3.9 We will also continue to maintain our flexible workforce. We have seen great success in the new Council Tax Billing role which works generically across Council Tax and Council Tax Support cases and we will continue to recruit vacancies to this new role as we see Universal Credit and Automation changing the way in which we receive and process our work.
- 3.10 We need to ensure that we have resilience in key roles and so we will develop a planning framework to ensure continued service delivery. We will have a programme of; identifying future leaders, leadership development, career pathways and use of coaching/mentoring, professional training/qualifications and external experiences in leadership.
- 3.11 Welfare reform is still high on the Governments agenda which may lead to fundamental changes in our service provision and so the plan includes actions to understand the impact on the partner councils of the changes, as information becomes available, there are also actions concerning the monitoring of the financial impact of the changes we have already seen.
- 3.12 The risk surrounding income from Business Rates remains red at this time because there is a risk in relation to subsequent appeals that may be received and reduce rates payable and in particular an appeal outstanding from Hospitals asking for Charitable relief which would have a significant impact on the partners affected (Finance teams and Section 151 officers are aware)
- 3.13 The register also continues to highlight the need to monitor the impact of Universal Credit on customers and grant income. We continue to influence changes in delivery through representation on DWP steering groups.

4 Options

1. To suggest changes and additions to the Service Delivery Plan and Risk Register.
2. To approve the Service Delivery Plan and Risk Register at Appendix B.

5 Reasons for recommendations

A Service Delivery Plan and Risk Register are requirements of the ARP agreement and are needed to agree the short to medium term priorities of the ARP in delivering services as effectively, efficiently and economically as possible and to identify the risks associated with the services.

6 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Risk

If a Service Delivery Plan is not agreed then the direction and priorities of service delivery can lose focus. The Plan allows members to monitor and direct service provision. The identification and mitigation of risk is necessary to ensure that Councils minimise the impact of risk on customers and the partner councils.

6.2 Financial

The Service Delivery plan requires the ARP officers to monitor and report on financial matters of relevance to the Section 151 officers of the ARP.

6.3 Legal

The ARP agreement requires a Service Delivery Plan to be agreed before the end of December each year.

6.4 Equality and Diversity

Not applicable.

Background papers:- None

Lead Contact Officer

Name/Post: Paul Corney (Head of the ARP)

Email: paul.corney@angliarevenues.gov.uk

Appendices attached to this report:

Appendix A – Service Delivery Plan December 2019 progress

Appendix B – Service Delivery Plan December 2020

Topic	Link to Strategic aims	Core Purpose	Summary Action Required	Links with other actions and projects	timeframe	Suppliers/Relationships	Interdependencies	Progress & completion date	Flag
Universal Credit implementation and other Welfare Reform	Customer Relationships Sustainability	Ensuring that customers receive, as far as possible, a seamless change to Universal Credit and other future welfare reforms by managing skills and knowledge of officers	Continue review of Revenues & Benefits service provision in the light of the introduction of Universal Credit and other future welfare reforms once migration timetable communicated by DWP	Workforce Strategy and Learning and Development Strategy	ongoing - current managed migration target for UC 2023	DWP	DWP are managing this process, we must understand the implications to us as the information concerning migration timetables become available	Strategic Manager Benefits attends national DWP group and keeps ARP informed as well as directing DWP to address LA issues. All ARP Councils have been in full service (for new claims) since the end of December - still awaiting info on Managed migration of existing cases.	
Automation of Services	Customer Digital Sustainability	Offering 24.7 & 365 services to customers to be able to transact with the Councils	Review of website and self service portal to ensure ease of access for customers using UX principles. For all eclaims/forms and system generated post to be auto indexed - and auto assessed where possible. There needs to be a review of existing supplier to decide whether a	Customer Journey project	Work already commenced - next milestones by end June 2020 - improved UCDS and review of COA automation	Dependent upon supplier engagement and delivery	A reliance on Capita and the Government Agencies agreeing data sharing protocols and providing data and software enabling automation	SPD automation completed (although we will continue to improve as Business as Usual (BAU) & UCDS automation at 50% for chang in circumstances - ongoing development	
Billing and Benefits letter production	Customer Sustainability	Annual exercise to get bills for new Council tax year and benefit letters to customers with in prescribed time to collect instalments	The production and dispatch of year end bills and benefit letters		Commence January for issue of bills and letters mid-march	External mailing Contract	Preceptors setting their Council Tax early enough for bills to be produced	Project plan to be developed by end January - Capita release scheduled for late Dec/early Jan	
Learning & Development Strategy	Colleagues Customers Sustainability	To oversee and ensure corporate L&D meets the strategic OD, Corporate Induction and service level workforce plans whilst maximising the Levy contributions from the partnership councils, in order to upskill the workforce and promote from within	Bi-annual review of operational TNA & skills gap priorities and provide direction to achieve key OD objectives inline with L&D calendar. Utilise Levy at each LA. Communicate career pathways/career clusters for each job profile. Improve internal and external secondment offering, job shadowing. Review operational skills needed to upskill or cross-train	Succession Planning strategy projects L&D Operational	Jul-20	SMT and Ops mgmt. ARP Trainers & Resilience Officers L&D teams	Reliance of Ops teams providing TNA data and any changes to Apprentice Levy schemes, with use of funding and providers available.	Information from Appraisals and Corporate teams for each partners to develop schedule of activities	
Leadership & Succession Planning	Colleagues Customers Sustainability	To identify key roles likely to vacate in next 1-5 years and build a succession planning framework to ensure continued service delivery.	A programme of ; identifying future leaders, leadership development, career pathways and use of coaching/mentoring, professional training/qualifications and external experiences in leadership	Succession Planning strategy L&D	Dec-20	OIB, SMT and Ops mgmt. Assessment Centre providers L&D teams	Reliance on TNA of leadership and identifying future leaders. Funding to deliver qualifications that can not be attained through Apprenticeship Levy	Key roles identified and actions being defined for each scenario wher ekey role vacated - to be completed end March 2020	
Work force Strategy	Colleagues Customers Sustainability	To provide operational HR metrics to manage and monitor people performance, budgeted headcount and be pro-active in identifying operational needs in line with agile working	Review ARP and operational workforce organisational structures & service reviews to support achievement of ARP key projects, agile/flexible working and customer service level agreements	Operational resource strategies Operational project timelines Customer service level agreements Staffing Budget	Dec-20	OIB, SMT & Operational Mgmt. team Financial team across ARP HRBP's	Current organisational structure and establishment to remain constant. LA's policies across partnership with regard to workforce planning strategies	All HR teams have approved the new Council Tax Billing (generic) role and we will continue to recruit to this new post as Council Tax and Benefits officers leave (where the transfer of HB cases to Universal credit and automation warrant this action)	
Well-Being Strategy	Colleagues Customers Sustainability	To support staff through well-being initiatives including good physical, mental and financial health, EAP's, OH and benefits available	Develop a ARP Well-Being Charter to target areas as a result of ARP survey, meet legislative requirements, effective communication tools (banners) and good practice to support H&WB at work. Promote EAP and Benefits packages i.e. financial & non-financial benefits (Neybour, WSWS, Norfolk Rewards). Annual survey. and work with external providers	Health & Well-Being Strategy Metrics data HR	01 July 2020	External Well-being providers HRBP's OIB, SMT and Ops mgmt. ALL Staff ACAS/legislation/casework/Unions Well-Being Champions & MHFA's	Funding to support well-being initiatives and suitable facilities to delivery them	A number of events have already been provided and a schedule of future events will be offered	
Resourcing Strategy	Colleagues Customers Sustainability	To resource staff with relevant skills inline with up to date JD's and PS to achieve strategic priorities in a timely manner	Develop recruitment website, potential applicant database, social media presence, develop e-assessment tools, job profiles, review JD/PS's, adverts and raise ARP branding & profile. Update Staff Success profiles for website	Recruitment website Comms strategy re online platforms Workforce Planning Succession Planning	Jan-21	ICT (ARP) ARP Corporate Comms	ICT systems to support recruitment website, links with partnership website remain unchanged and introduction of new roles to suit service delivery requirements	Recruitment site ready for data to populate	

Sharing of Good Practice	Colleagues Customers Relationships Sustainability	Challenge and support to encourage new ways of working, sharing of good practice and innovation through "function" support teams	To review terms of reference of existing Function Support Teams and for OIB to agree other groups that add value to sharing of intelligence and good practice across the partnership	Links to most other actions - Communications and delivery will be partner responsibility	Scoping by March 2020	Members of groups	All terms of reference documents are subject to review, and new editions should make specific reference to the ways they support ARP's strategic themes. Format will be consistent, following the layout of the most recent set (at the time of writing) for the new Communications Support Team	Although the infrastructure is in place for these teams, due to Covid they have not been able to meet regularly - this action will carry forward.	
Harmonisation	Colleagues Customers relationships Sustainability	Organise processes / transactions so that they are designed around the needs and accessibility of the customer	There are a number of areas where partners receive different services or, where ARPs access to partner systems and other functions/information is different - there is a need to review why these differences exist and to assess the benefits of harmonisation of service delivery across the partnership	Automation and Self Service	By September 2020 identify areas and agree resolution	partners	Local requirements and other department needs	This work has started again but is delayed by Covid - very positive meetings have been held in the last 2 months	
Performance management	Colleagues Customers Digital Relationships Sustainability	To ensure that customers receive prompt accurate service by ensuring that the correct individual, team and organisational performance measures (and reporting) are in place to manage service delivery across the ARP	Design a performance management framework to enable a clear line of sight between planning, measuring, monitoring and reporting on performance and support SMT in performing their role through ensuring effective performance reporting arrangements are in place	Integral to all activities	new Approach for approval JC for 2021/22 year	OIB, SMT, Function Support Teams	All officers on each group must engage with group and complete tasks agreed by the groups	This action is on track to be brought to OIB and Joint Committee before April 2021 with recommendations for a revised performance management framework	
Quality/GDPR/Audit	Customer Relationships Sustainability	Ensuring that the correct checks and balances are in place to provide security of data and efficient processes	Ensuring that Internal Audit Plan recommendations are followed up and completed within agreed timeframe and applying risk based quality assurance work to ensure processes are followed and error is minimised	Integral to all activities	Annual audit plan agreed with audit partnership/SLA	SMT and Ops mgmt. ARP Trainers & Resilience Officers L&D teams	Link to Partnership audit requirements and advice	Audits are currently being started to review progress against actions - known actions have been actioned where possible	
Maximising taxbases	Relationships Sustainability	Ensure all relevant properties are included on a Valuation List and to bring properties back in to use and / or understand why they remain empty - campaign to encourage owners to get properties occupied - to maximise income	To identify properties not in the lists or, with reduced charge that should be charged more Council Tax or Business Rates	Budget monitoring and Quality, Audit	Initial letters by early June	Planning, Housing Teams and ARP	Data to be shared so that taxbase is maximised and reasons for properties being empty are recorded and reviewed periodically	The annual exercise could not be carried out this year due to the pressures of Covid and the suspension of any visiting during lockdown	
Budget monitoring	Relationships Sustainability	To keep officers and members informed of performance against projections to ensure that financial planning can be accurate and to ensure Subsidy is not qualified and is maximised	Monitor income, expenditure and Subsidy in the light of NNDR retention scheme, LCTRS, UC and conversion issues	Maximising Taxbases	Annually - April-March initial review against budget on monthly basis and report to 151 officers any variance	OIB, SMT & Operational Mgmt. team Financial team across ARP HRBP's	Finance officer function group will continue to agree information to be provided and frequency	Reported quarterly to JC - Finance teams advised if issue identified monthly - for 19/20 budget targets achieved - this is likely to be different in 21/22 due to impact of Covid	
NNDR retention and revaluation	Relationships Sustainability	Prepare for business rates retention changes announced - Councils to retain increased percentage of Business Rates and full business rates review	Information to be provided to officers and members concerning the impact of changes to the NNDR system.	Budget monitoring	April 2021 implementation date	Finance officers	Valuation Office data required and Capital testing	Revaluation suspended - new date currently 2023 - to be in 22/23 plan	
Expansion of Enforcement Agency	Relationships Sustainability	To increase resilience through the expansion of the Enforcement Agency to enable the ARP to sustain performance levels during peaks of work and to cover sickness and turnover more efficiently	To increase the number of Councils joining the Enforcement Agency using an agreed model The model will create circumstances that will allow other councils to share risks and benefits in their areas.		Ongoing	business case for JC, OIB approvals	The service will be delegated to an ARP partner council and the terms of the partnership will be agreed by OIB. The introduction of new councils to the service will involve work for the West Suffolk IT team and external systems providers.	South Norfolk and Norwich have delegated function to Breckland and they pass work to ARP - Norwich work has been received from November 2019 and should continue on regular basis now	
Team Cohesion	Colleagues Customers Relationships Sustainability	To develop an improved understanding of each service area within ARP, build team work through projects, corporate events and well-being initiatives	Service area awareness events, improve induction programmes and cross-skilling opportunities through job shadowing	ARP Communications Strategy HR Strategy Operational Service Plans	Sept - Dec 2020	All Ops mgmt.		Induction programmes working well and wellbeing work too - there have been no corporate events due to Covid.	

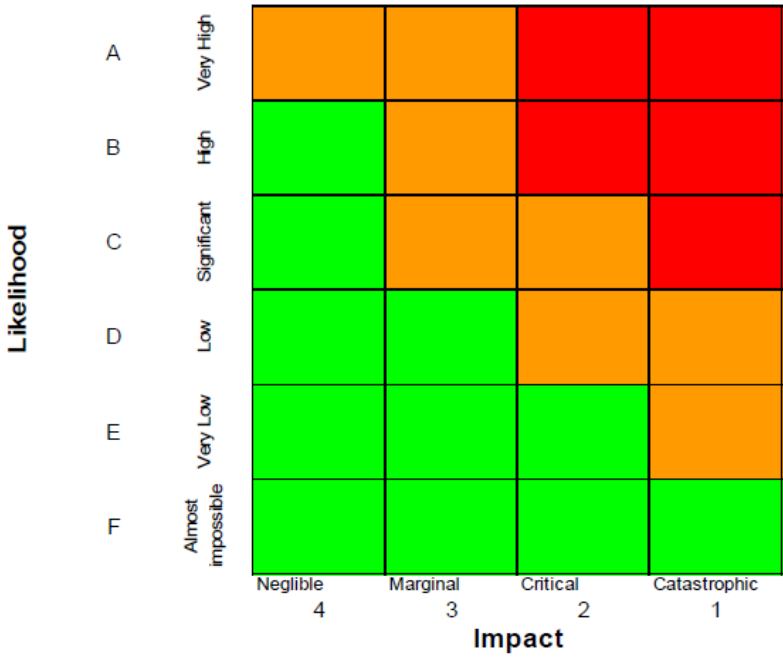
APPENDIX A - Joint Committee Service Plan and Risk Register 2019-2020 - Risks

Ref.	Risk Title	Risk Description	Consequences	Opportunities	Risk Owner	Risk Manager	Current Controls	Mitigating Actions	Date added	Date Updated	Curr. Score	Tgt Score	Trend
	Business continuity	Loss of key staff due to welfare reform and potential reduction in required resource	Inability to meet statutory requirements and to deliver services according to performance targets	With the expanded partnership we can ensure that skills are more widely held	Head of ARP and Strategic managers	Head of ARP	Staff are encouraged to take IRRV exams and NVQs and internal structures allow for career progression - reasons for staff leaving are being monitored to identify whether this becomes a reason for staff leaving	Transformation programme has identified opportunities for training and staff development - monitoring of reasons for staff leaving shows that it is not currently due to concerns over welfare reform	01/04/14	08/11/2019	C4	C4	Reached target score
	Business continuity	Loss of premises, loss of power/telecoms and/or loss of systems - a new emphasis must be placed on loss of systems in relation to cyber attack	Difficulty in finding some members of staff access to systems or, loss of systems	Shared services mean that we operate from 4 centres and work can be carried out from 6 sites	Strategic Manager (Support)	Strategic Manager (Support)	Systems mirrored at 2 sites enabling work to continue. A large number of staff are home enabled and more could be on a short term basis. Workers can be asked to travel to alternative sites. West Suffolk IT update systems with new patches and protection regularly and systems are PSN compliant	Access to Mirrored servers in FHCC regularly tested. Business Continuity plan agreed with partners - fail testing to be arranged. West Suffolk IT are working on specific mitigation of cyber attack and this will be reported in future risk reports	01/04/14	08/11/2019	E2	E2	Reached target score
	Transformation Programme and budget efficiencies	Income/efficiencies equal to the reduction in Administration Grant are not achieved	If income is not secured to meet shortfall then reductions in budget will be required through savings which will impact on service provision	Income may exceed projected budget	Strategic Management Team and OIB (Revenues)	Strategic Management Team and OIB (Revenues)	Target for efficiencies of over £1,000,000 achieved for 2018/19	Actions in transformation programme has seen savings and income generation achieved savings - progress is monitored by OIB	11/11/2016	08/11/2019	D3	D3	Efficiency target reached for 2019/20 - Digital transformation required to achieve efficiency targets for 21/22 and beyond
	Income from retained Business rates and Council Tax	Income from NDR and Council Tax do not meet budgeted amount	The income available to the Councils is insufficient to meet needs	Income may exceed projected budget	Strategic Manager (Revenues)	Strategic Manager (Revenues)	Monitoring will continue for 2019/20. Revaluation 2017, appeals adds risk for life of 2017 list	The NNDR1 and Taxbase calculations include provision for bad debt and appeals - on target to meet spending requirements this risk increased with Re-val in 2017	01/04/14	08/11/2019	C1	D2	Appeals from hospitals may lead to significant refunds for some partners that mean that income would be below target
	Localised Council Tax Reduction Scheme	Upon LCTRS review the reduction in help received by LCTRS claimants is reduced to the point where they can not afford to pay or, unemployment levels rise to a level that make the scheme unaffordable	Customers are asked to pay more than they can afford and arrears accrue	Increased income from Council Tax could be achieved	Strategic Manager (Benefits)	Strategic Manager (Benefits)	Current scheme has set payment levels at or below Attachment of Benefit levels for all but one Council which gives realistic opportunity to recover	If revised scheme reduces awards of LCTRS then funding from County Councils should be sought to fund additional recovery officers	01/04/14	08/11/2019	D3	D3	Reached target score
	A partner or partners leave the partnership	A reduction in partners could occur for a number of reasons in the future such as Local Govt reorganisation	Possible loss of key staff and TUPE implications - loss of resilience - also leading to increased cost of service and reduction in VFM	Develop trading opportunities to carry out some functions for other Councils	Head of ARP	Head of ARP	Partnering agreement includes notice period for cessation of partnership. ARPT being developed as trading vehicle	Opportunities for trading to be considered and business cases developed	01/04/14	08/11/2019	E3	E3	Reached target score
	Billing and Benefit letter production	External printer does not issue daily or annual bills and letters within legal timescale	Bills may have first instalment date later than 01/04/2018 which could result in loss or delay in collection of Council Tax and Business Rates	The contract will continue to offer significant savings to the Councils	Strategic manager (support)	Strategic manager (support)	2015/16 to 2019/20 annual billing process successful and daily bills and letters designed and active with current printers	The process was carried out successfully last year and testing will ensure that all documents are sent with correct information and on time	01/04/14	08/11/2019	E2	E2	Reached target score
	Housing benefit subsidy shortfall	Overpayments that are a local authority's fault can be claimed back as income if the value is less than 0.48% of the overall HB expenditure. Extrapolation by External Audit teams can also take Councils over the threshold	If LA error is not kept below this level it can have a significant financial impact on councils	To ensure that processes and procedures are correct and are followed and to ensure that backlogs do not effect LA error and that error is kept to a minimum so that Audit do not have cause to extrapolate subsidy overpayments	Strategic Manager (Benefits)	Strategic Manager (Benefits)	Rigorous procedures and high level of professional training. We have a Quality Assurance team that test accuracy levels and looks for and at areas of weakness. All councils were kept below LA error levels for audited claims from 2013/14 to 2017/18 due to robust challenge of Audit findings and extensive work to identify drill down to avoid extrapolation having an adverse effect	To continue to use overtime and agency where vacancies mean that there is a risk to subsidy. To continue to apply QA to areas identified in audits and random testing to identify other areas of risk / error	11/12/14	08/11/2019	D3	D3	Reached target score
	Universal Credit implementation	Uncertainty over future funding from DWP and CLG. Affect upon customers currently receiving HB and resultant impact on customer teams	UC has been rolled out to new claimants but later a managed migration of HB caseload will occur - the impact on customers and social Landlords will be enormous if the migration falters	To continue to work with the DWP and Stakeholders to jointly offer customers assistance in making the transition	Strategic Manager (Benefits)	Strategic Manager (Benefits)	We have entered in to an agreement with DWP to jointly help customers to make the transition and agreed a Universal Support Partnership with them.	Assess the impact of claims moving to the DWP - modelling can take place to understand how ARP will be impacted as the timetable for all councils is issued.	11/12/14	08/11/2019	D3	D3	Reached target score
	Fraud and Error	Risk of Fraud entering the system if retained fraud team are not kept. LCTRS fraud and Council Tax fraud will not be investigated by the DWP - retained service has to be self funding	If no service is retained by the partnership then Fraud will not be identified in cases.	Funding to resource interventions in cases currently receiving benefit and to retain joint funding from County and Police	Strategic Manager (Benefits)	Strategic Manager (Benefits)	Team retained to investigate LCTRS, Tenancy, Ctax discount/exemptions and NNDR since 01/09/15	Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils have agreed funding for Fraud team till 31/03/20 - quarterly reporting to County Councils to demonstrate the impact of the Fraud team.	11/12/14	08/11/2019	C2	C2	Reached target score

Risk management process and toolkit

Step 3 – Prioritisation using the matrix below

- How likely is this risk?
- How big an impact will this risk have?



Steps 4 and 5 – Mitigation and monitoring

Mitigation	Monitoring
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assess current actions and controls Adequate or more needed.• Within your Service Plans -develop specific SMART actions that will either reduce the likelihood of the risks or minimise the impact.• What should the score be after you have taken action?	<p>Review the Risk Register with colleagues (for example, as part of your Service Plan) at least quarterly</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Risks changed?• New risks?• Need to report or escalate risks?• Risks ranking changed?

Definitions		Impact	Example Descriptions
Likelihood			
Very High	> 90%	Negligible	Financial impact below £10k, no effect on partnership / service provision or reputation, minor delays to a project, limited physical consequences
High	55%- 90%	Marginal	£10k - £200K, service slightly reduced broken bones/illness, objectives of one team not met, minor adverse local media, impact on an external inspection (s)
Significant	15%- 55%	Critical	£200K - £500k, service suspended short term / reduced, loss of life/major illness, service objectives not met, industrial action, adverse national publicity, service taken over temporarily
Low	5% - 15%		
Very Low	1% - 5%	Catastrophic	£500k +, partnership / service suspended long term, statutory duties not delivered, major loss of life/large scale major illness, corporate objectives not met, mass staff leaving/unable to attract staff, Remembered for years!! Service taken over permanently
Almost Impossible	0% - 1%		

Topic	Link to Strategic aims	Core Purpose	Summary Action Required	Links with other actions and projects	timeframe	Suppliers/Relationships	Interdependencies	Progress & completion date	Flag
Universal Credit implementation and other Welfare Reform	Customer Relationships Sustainability	Ensuring that customers receive, as far as possible, a seamless change to Universal Credit and other future welfare reforms by managing skills and knowledge of officers	Continue review of Revenues & Benefits service provision in the light of the introduction of Universal Credit and other future welfare reforms once migration timetable communicated by DWP	Workforce Strategy and Learning and Development Strategy	ongoing - current managed migration target for UC 2023	DWP	DWP are managing this process, we must understand the implications to us as the information concerning migration timetables become available	Strategic Manager Benefits attends national DWP group and keeps ARP informed as well as directing DWP to address LA issues. All ARP Councils have been in full service (for new claims) since the end of December - still awaiting info on Managed migration of existing cases.	
Customer journey - online services	Customer Digital Sustainability	To offer as simple a journey as possible for the customer to access online services and information. Where possible to offer 24.7 & 365 services to customers to be able to transact with the Councils which will increase self-service transactions using online forms that lead to automation	To work with Customer Service teams to make links between websites as seamless as possible. To develop the Capita Change of Address (COA) form and to furhter develop current online forms and integration into the back office. To furhter improve the take up of online services	This project is part of the Customer Journey programme and, in particular, links to the automation action on this service plan	Testing has commenced on the Capita COA form and the Customer Teams are deteermining the strategy for seamless websites	Capita provide ARP with the protal and online form functionality	A reliance on Capita providing data and software enabling automation	The detailed plan for COA is being developed - based upon testing of Capitas improved form received recently. The Customer Strategy Team (leads from all LAs and ARP) are developing strategy concerning development of the website.	
Customer Journey - Automation of Services	Customer Digital Sustainability	To maximise the number of automated transactions, that are received electronically, to speed up processing times for customers and to provide efficiencies	Self service forms to be auto-indexed (a significant percentage of form are now auto-indexed) - and auto assessment increased. UCDS automation on change of circs to be increased (currently at around 50%. Develop automation of new claims with Capita.	This project is part of the Customer Journey programme and, in particular, links to the online services action on this service plan	Work already commenced - next milestones by end June 2020 - improved UCDS and review of COA automation	Dependent upon supplier engagement and delivery	A reliance on Capita and the Government Agencies agreeing data sharing protocols and providing data and software enabling automation	UCDS automation of changes at 50% and work continues with Capita to improve. We will also seek to automate new claims in the new year	
NDR, Recovery and Enforcement - EDMS	colleagues Digital sustainability	To ensure data is held on Edms and is held in a manner that improves performance information	To ensure data is submitted to EDMS in format that breaks transactions down. To creat efficient processes to pass work to relevant officers through drip-feed	Performance Framework	by end November 2021	EDMS team, System Adminand Capita	EDMS team, System Adminand Capita	Some reports and processes already developed	
Coovid 19 - agile workforce	Colleagues Customers Digital Relationships Sustainability	Ensuring that customers receive, as far as possible, a seamless service by managing skills, resources and knowledge of officers. To ensure that future working models are developed in light of the cultural changes seen from Covid	The New Normal programme looks at the future of service provision in providing online solutions (covered in other actions in the plan) and in ensuring that staff have the resources and support they need working at home or in the office	Wellbeing, Customer Journey, Learning, Development Strategy and Resourcing Strategy	Ongoing	HR, Support Team, Ops Managers and SMT	Pandemic	A huge amount of work from WS IT has facilitated all officers to be able to work from home.	
Billing and Benefits letter production	Customer Sustainability	Annual exercise to get bills for new Council tax year and benefit letters to customers with in prescribed time to collect instalments	The production and dispatch of year end bills and benefit letters		Commence January for issue of bills and letters mid-march	External mailing Contract	Preceptors setting their Council Tax early enough for bills to be produced	Project plan to be developed by end January - Capita release scheduled for late Dec/early Jan	
Learning & Development Strategy	Colleagues Customers Sustainability	To oversee and ensure corporate L&D meets the strategic OD, Corporate Induction and service level workforce plans whilst maximising the Levy contributions from the partnership councils, in order to upskill the workforce and promote from within	Bi-annual review of operational TNA & skills gap priorities and provide direction to achieve key OD objectives inline with L&D calendar. Utilise Levy at each LA. Communicate career pathways/career clusters for each job profile. Improve internal and external secondment offering, job shadowing. Review operational skills needed to upskill or cross-train	Succession Planning L&D Operational strategy projects	Jul-20	SMT and Ops mgmt. ARP Trainers & Resilience Officers L&D teams	Reliance of Ops teams providing TNA data and any changes to Apprentice Levy schemes, with use of funding and providers available.	Information from Appraisals and Corporate teams for each partners to develop schedule of activities	
Leadership & Succession Planning	Colleagues Customers Sustainability	Develop a strategic approach to succession planning at Management level so that we identify and develop our leaders of the future inhouse where possible in areas of virtual leadership traits.	Create Leadership and Management development programmes to support succession planning. Commit to matrix working, job shadowing, sharing knowledge and skills to build workforce resilience. Incorporate mandatory mental health awareness into leadership and management development programmes. Consider future structure in light of critical Managers leaving	Resource Management	April 2021 - 01/05/2022	OIB, SMT and Ops mgmt. Assessment Centre providers L&D teams	Reliance on TNA of leadership and identifying future leaders as part of new ARP structure. Funding to deliver qualifications that can not be attained through Apprenticeship Levy	Assessment of critiical posts and age profiles have been looked at OIB will be considering recommendations from Head of ARP	

Work force Strategy	Colleagues Customers Sustainability	To provide operational HR metrics to manage and monitor people performance, budgeted headcount and be pro-active in identifying operational needs in line with agile working	Review ARP and operational workforce organisational structures & service reviews to support achievement of ARP key projects, agile/flexible working and customer service level agreements	Operational resource strategies Operational project timelines Customer service level agreements Staffing Budget	Dec-20	OIB, SMT & Operational Mgmt. team Financial team across ARP HRBP's	Current organisational structure and establishment to remain constant. LA's policies across partnership with regard to workforce planning strategies	All HR teams have approved the new Council Tax Billing (generic) role and we will continue to recruit to this new post as Council Tax and Benefits officers leave (where the transfer of HB cases to Universal credit and automation warrant this action)	
Well-Being Strategy	Colleagues Customers Sustainability	To continue to pulse survey and support staff through well-being initiatives, prepare them for new ways of working, good physical, mental and financial health info on ARP HUB, EAP's, OH and benefits available.	Continue to develop an ARP Well-Being Charter to target areas as a result of ARP survey. Promote virtual events and good practice to support H&WB at work. Promote EAP and Benefits packages i.e. financial & non-financial benefits. Staff Forum Annual survey and / or mini pulse surveys to include ARP culture and acting on areas which prohibit a healthy and positive workplace culture	Health & Well-Being Strategy and Implement ARP WB Charter	01/04/21 - on going	External Well-being providers HRBP's OIB, SMT and Ops mgmt. ALL Staff ACAS/legislation/casework/Union Well-Being Champions & MHFA's	Funding to support well-being initiatives and suitable facilities to delivery them	A significant amount of material and workshops have been made available to officers before and during lockdown	
Resourcing Strategy	Colleagues Customers Sustainability	Review and modernise our approaches to recruitment and retention, to make sure that we attract and retain valued employee's	Develop a brand strategy to include social media presence and approach to engaging prospective employees. Review and update virtual recruitment tools and assessments of candidates	Workforce Planning and Implement e-recruitment	April 2021 - April 2023	ICT (ARP) ARP Corporate Comms	Links with partnership website remain unchanged and HR SLA arrangement	A process for interviewing and training remotely has been successfully implemented now we need to further develop testing of candidates etc.	
Communication and Digital Strategy		Promote a digital culture throughout the organisation through a digital champions network.	Utilise variety of digital platforms to develop framework for measuring impact of ARP services for the partnership and ARP branding. Work closely with programme, project and Comms Officer/ ARP HUB administrator team to increase accessibility and use of ARP HUB.	Implement digital learning - corporate. ARP Communications Strategy	April 2021-2023	WS IT Team		ARP Hub is live and continues to be developed within service areas	
Sharing of Good Practice	Colleagues Customers Relationships Sustainability	Challenge and support to encourage new ways of working, sharing of good practice and innovation through "function" support teams	To review terms of reference of existing Function Support Teams and for OIB to agree other groups that add value to sharing of intelligence and good practice across the partnership	Links to most other actions - Communications and delivery will be partner responsibility	Scoping by March 2021	Members of groups	All terms of reference documents are subject to review, and new editions should make specific reference to the ways they support ARP's strategic themes. Format will be consistent, following the layout of the most recent set (at the time of writing) for the new Communications Support Team	Over time a number of specialist teams have been set up to discuss future approach to various issues - the next step should be for OIB to formalise the groups needed and each groups terms of reference should be agreed	
Performance management	Colleagues Customers Digital Relationships Sustainability	To ensure that customers receive prompt accurate service by ensuring that the correct individual, team and organisational performance measures (and reporting) are in place to manage service delivery across the ARP	Design a performance management framework to enable a clear line of sight between planning, measuring, monitoring and reporting on performance and support SMT in performing their role through ensuring effective performance reporting arrangements are in place	Integral to all activities	new Approach for approval March 21 JC for 2021/22 year	OIB, SMT, Function Support Teams	All officers on each group must engage with group and complete tasks agreed by the groups	All Business Units are on target to develop performance measures for their teams that will form part of the Performance Management Framework	
Quality/GDPR/Audit	Customer Relationships Sustainability	Ensuring that the correct checks and balances are in place to provide security of data and efficient processes	Ensuring that Internal Audit Plan recommendations are followed up and completed within agreed timeframe and applying risk based quality assurance work to ensure processes are followed and error is minimised	Integral to all activities	Annual audit plan agreed with audit partnership/SLA	SMT and Ops mgmt. ARP Trainers & Resilience Officers L&D teams	Link to Partnership audit requirements and advice	Quarterly updates are provided	
Maximising taxbase Council Tax	Relationships Sustainability	Ensure all relevant properties are included on a Valuation List and to bring properties back in to use and / or understand why they remain empty - campaign to encourage owners to get properties occupied - to maximise income	To identify properties not in the lists or, with reduced charge that should be charged more Council Tax. To maximise use of Total Mobile to improve efficiencies in visits	Budget monitoring and Quality, Audit	Initial letters by early June for empty property review. Monthly timetable for review of discount and exemptions	Planning, Housing Teams and ARP	Data to be shared so that taxbase is maximised and reasons for properties being empty are recorded and reviewed periodically	During the year cases are reviewed and in addition an annual exercise is started at the end of may, working with partner housing teams, to review all long term empty properties before the Council Tax Base is calculated for MHDCLG	

Maximising taxbase NNDR	Relationships Sustainability	Identify method and undertake full review of SBRR across partnership putting in place facility for on going checks, carry out periodic review of Reliefs and exemptions and exercises to identify hereditaments that are missing or altered	To identify hereditaments not in the lists or, with reduced charge that should be charged more Business Rates. To maximise use of Total Mobile to improve efficiencies in visits	Budget monitoring and Quality, Audit	Initial letters by early September 2021 for SBRR review. Timetable for review of reliefs and exemptions	Planning, Housing Teams and ARP	Data to be shared so that taxbase is maximised and reasons for properties being empty are recorded and reviewed periodically	During the year cases are reviewed and in addition an annual exercise is started at the end of may, working with partner housing teams, to review all long term empty properties before the Council Tax Base is calculated for MHDCLG	
Budget monitoring	Relationships Sustainability	To keep officers and members informed of performance against projections to ensure that financial planning can be accurate and to ensure Subsidy is not qualified and is maximised	Monitor income, expenditure and Subsidy in the light of NNDR retention scheme, LCTRS, UC and conversion issues	Maximising Taxbases	Annually - April-March initial review against budget on monthly basis and report to 151 officers any variance	OIB, SMT & Operational Mgmt. team Financial team across ARP HRBP's	Finance officer function group will continue to agree information to be provided and frequency	Reported quarterly to JC - Finance teams advised if issue identified monthly	
Team Cohesion	Colleagues Customers Relationships Sustainability	To develop an improved understanding of each service area within ARP, build team work through projects, coss cutting events events and well-being initiates	Service area awareness events, improve induction programmes and cross-skilling opportunities through job shadowing	ARP Communications Strategy HR Strategy Operational Service Plans	Ongoing	All Ops mgmt.		Initial stage will be to scope suggested activities and assess cost of events.	

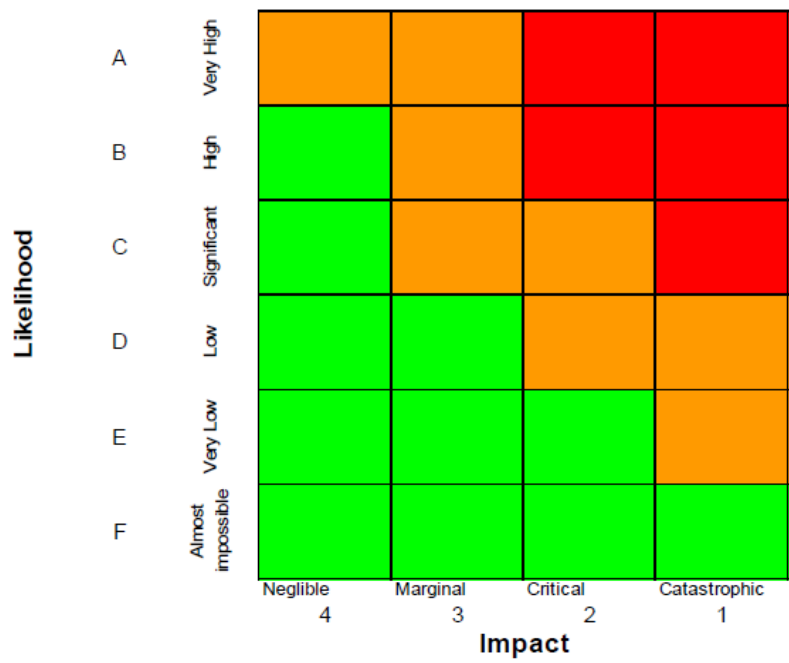
APPENDIX B - Joint Committee Service Plan and Risk Register - Risks

Ref.	Risk Title	Risk Description	Consequences	Opportunities	Risk Owner	Risk Manager	Current Controls	Mitigating Actions	Date added	Date Updated	Curr. Score	Tgt Score	Trend
	Business continuity	Loss of key staff due to welfare reform and potential reduction in required resource	Inability to meet statutory requirements and to deliver services according to performance targets	With the expanded partnership we can ensure that skills are more widely held	Head of ARP and Strategic managers	Head of ARP	Staff are encouraged to take IRRV exams and NVQs and internal structures allow for career progression - reasons for staff leaving are being monitored to identify whether this becomes a reason for staff leaving	Transformation programme has identified opportunities for training and staff development - monitoring of reasons for staff leaving shows that it is not currently due to concerns over welfare reform	01/04/14	06/11/2020	C4	C4	Reached target score
	Business continuity	Loss of premises, loss of power/telecoms and/or loss of systems - a new emphasis must be placed on loss of systems in relation to cyber attack	Difficulty in finding some members of staff access to systems or, loss of systems	Shared services mean that we operate from 4 centres and work can be carried out from 6 sites	Strategic Manager (Support)	Strategic Manager (Support)	Systems mirrored at 2 sites enabling work to continue. All staff are home enabled now. West Suffolk IT update systems with new patches and protection regularly and systems are PSN compliant	Access to Mirrored servers in FHEC regularly tested. Business Continuity plan agreed with partners - fail testing carried out and lessons learned applied. West Suffolk IT have worked on specific mitigation of cyber attack which reduces risk	01/04/14	06/11/2020	E2	E2	Reached target score
	COVID-19	Increased demand due to economic impact of Covid - 19 and extra Government requirements e.g. continuation of Hardship Fund and Self Isolation schemes. Withholding enforcement reducing income for Councils	Processing delays, deterioration in customer service, risk to LA error, risk to collection and recovery, increased complaints	To continue to engage with DWP/HMCLG/DHSC at a national level as an early warning system and to shape implications.	SMT	SMT	Lack of Government forecasting on economic impact upon a demand led service means we are reacting.	Issuing of soft reminders nad 'soft' recovery approach. Extra/redeployed resources, agency working and overtime might be required.	29/10/20	06/11/2020	B3	B3	Dependant upon management of the pandemic
	Income from retained Business rates and Council Tax	Income from NDR and Council Tax do not meet budgeted amount, in particular, due to impact of pandemic on businesses and individuals and potential appeals against rateable value - also the potential impact of Brexit	The income available to the Councils is insufficient to meet needs	Income may exceed projected budget	Strategic Manager (Revenues)	Strategic Manager (Revenues)	Monitoring will continue for 2020/21. Revaluation 2017, appeals adds risk for life of 2017 list	The NNDR1 and Taxbase calculations include provision for bad debt and appeals - on target to meet spending requirements this risk increased with Re-val in 2017	01/04/14	06/11/2020	C1	D2	Appeals from hospitals may lead to significant refunds and we have yet to see whether Covid and/or Brexit will cause bankruptcy and insolvency
	Localised Council Tax Reduction Scheme	Unemployment levels rise to a level that make the scheme unaffordable - this risk has risen due to potential impact of Covid	Customers are asked to pay more than they can afford and arrears accrue	Increased income from Council Tax could be achieved	Strategic Manager (Benefits)	Strategic Manager (Benefits)	Current scheme has set payment levels at or below Attachment of Benefit levels for all but one Council which gives realistic opportunity to recover - Councils and the Govt are doing what they can to support businesses to keep unemployment levels from rising	If revised scheme reduces awards of LCTRS then funding from County Councils should be sought to fund additional recovery officers	01/04/14	06/11/2020	D3	D3	Reached target score
	A partner or partners leave the partnership	A reduction in partners could occur for a number of reasons in the future such as Local Govt reorganisation	Possible loss of key staff and TUPE implications - loss of resilience - also leading to increased cost of service and reduction in VFM	Develop trading opportunities to carry out some functions for other Councils	Head of ARP	Head of ARP	Partnering agreement includes notice period for cessation of partnership. ARPT being developed as trading vehicle	Opportunities for trading to be considered and business cases developed	01/04/14	06/11/2020	E3	E3	Reached target score
	Billing and Benefit letter production	External printer does not issue daily or annual bills and letters within legal timescale	Bills may have first instalment date later than 01/04/2018 which could result in loss or delay in collection of Council Tax and Business Rates	The contract will continue to offer significant savings to the Councils	Strategic manager (support)	Strategic manager (support)	2015/16 to 2019/20 annual billing process successful and daily bills and letters designed and active with current printers	The process was carried out successfully last year and testing will ensure that all documents are sent with correct information and on time	01/04/14	06/11/2020	E2	E2	Reached target score
	Housing benefit subsidy shortfall	Overpayments that are a local authority's fault can be claimed back as income if the value is less than 0.48% of the overall HB expenditure. Extrapolation by External Audit teams can also take Councils over the threshold	If LA error is not kept below this level it can have a significant financial impact on councils	To ensure that processes and procedures are correct and are followed and to ensure that backlogs do not effect LA error and that error is kept to a minimum so that Audit do not have cause to extrapolate subsidy overpayments	Strategic Manager (Benefits)	Strategic Manager (Benefits)	Rigorous procedures and high level of professional training. We have a Quality Assurance team that test accuracy levels and looks for and at areas of weakness. All councils were kept below LA error levels for audited claims from 2013/14 to 2017/18 due to robust challenge of Audit findings and extensive work to identify drill down to avoid extrapolation having an adverse effect	To continue to use overtime and agency where vacancies mean that there is a risk to subsidy. To continue to applyQA to areas identified in audits and random testing to identify other areas of risk / error	11/12/14	06/11/2020	D3	D3	Reached target score
	Universal Credit implementation	Uncertainty over future funding from DWP and CLG. Affect upon customers currently receiving HB and resultant impact on customer teams	UC has been rolled out to new claimants but later a managed migration of HB caseload will occur - the impact on customers and social Landlords will be enormous if the migration falters	To continue to work with the DWP and Stakeholders to jointly offer customers assistance in making the transition	Strategic Manager (Benefits)	Strategic Manager (Benefits)	We have entered in to an agreement with DWP to jointly help customers to make the transition and agreed a Universal Support Partnership with them.	Assess the impact of claims moving to the DWP - modelling can take place to understand how ARP will be impacted as the timetable for all councils is issued.	11/12/14	06/11/2020	D3	D3	Reached target score
	Fraud and Error	Risk of Fraud entering the system if retained fraud team are not kept. LCTRS fraud and Council Tax fraud will not be investigated by the DWP - retained service has to be self funding	If no service is retained by the partnership then Fraud will not be identified in cases.	Funding to resource interventions in cases currently receiving benefit and to retain joint funding from County and Police	Strategic Manager (Benefits)	Strategic Manager (Benefits)	Team retained to investigate LCTRS. Tenancy, Ctax discount/exemptions and NNDR since 01/09/15	Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils have agreed funding for Fraud team till 31/03/20 - quarterly reporting to County Councils to demonstrate the impact of the Fraud team.	11/12/14	06/11/2020	C2	C2	Reached target score

Risk management process and toolkit

Step 3 – Prioritisation using the matrix below

- How likely is this risk?
- How big an impact will this risk have?



Steps 4 and 5 – Mitigation and monitoring	
Mitigation	Monitoring
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assess current actions and controls Adequate or more needed.• Within your Service Plans -develop specific SMART actions that will either reduce the likelihood of the risks or minimise the impact.• What should the score be after you have taken action?	<p>Review the Risk Register with colleagues (for example, as part of your Service Plan) at least quarterly</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Risks changed?• New risks?• Need to report or escalate risks?• Risks ranking changed?

Definitions	
Likelihood	
Very High	> 90%
High	55% -90%
Significant	15%- 55%
Low	5% - 15%
Very Low	1% - 5%
Almost Impossible	0% - 1%

Impact	Example Descriptions
Negligible	Financial impact below £10k, no effect on partnership / service provision or reputation, minor delays to a project, limited physical consequences
Marginal	£10k - £200K, service slightly reduced broken bones/illness, objectives of one team not met, minor adverse local media, impact on an external inspection (s)
Critical	£200K - £500k, service suspended short term / reduced, loss of life/major illness, service objectives not met, industrial action, adverse national publicity, service taken over temporarily
Catastrophic	£500k +, partnership / service suspended long term, statutory duties not delivered, major loss of life/large scale major illness, corporate objectives not met, mass staff leaving/unable to attract staff, Remembered for years!! Service taken over permanently

ANGLIA REVENUES PARTNERSHIP

Report of Adrian Mills – ARP Strategic Manager (Billing & Benefits)

To: ARP Joint Committee, 8th December 2020

Subject: Welfare Reform

Purpose: To provide an update on welfare reform

Recommendation(s):

- That the report is noted.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1** Welfare Reform was introduced by Government in 2012 as part of wider fiscal measures to reduce deficits, with the intention to encourage work whilst reducing welfare expenditure. This report contains the latest updates on welfare reform and builds on previous reports to Joint Committee.

2.0 Matters of interest

2.1 Universal Credit – situation to date

2.1.1 Universal Support

- 2.1.2** The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) established Universal Support to help people to claim Universal Credit and budgeting support to help customers to manage their payments.

- 2.1.3** Since the introduction of Universal Credit, the DWP has funded Local Authorities to provide these services, who in turn have been free to do so either directly or through commissioning arrangements. The ARP partner Councils provided direct help to claim within their Customer Services teams, with all bar one of the Councils funding Citizen's Advice to provide budgeting support.

- 2.1.4** From the 1st April 2019 the DWP awarded a 12 month contract to Citizens Advice (CAB) to provide these services. CAB nationally have, through their various CAB networks throughout Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk, established the following arrangements locally:

- Advisors dial into a national call centre
- Web chat
- Face to face arrangements – some on an appointment basis, others on a drop in basis or a mixture of the two. Rural provision can be patchy

- 2.1.5** Concerns have been raised that CAB are only funded to help to the first payment. Given DWP's processing figures show 80% of claims are paid on time (at five weeks) and given that the Housing Element (for rent) is typically the cause of delay, concerns have been expressed that vulnerable people may be affected and at risk of falling into rent arrears and subsequent consequences. CAB have said they will continue to help such customers, drawing on their usual funding streams.

- 2.1.6** The partner Customer Services teams intend to continue to help customers to claim, which may include signposting to CAB.
- 2.1.7** ARP continues to monitor the position and through meetings with the LGA and DWP, will continue to raise issues and concerns.
- 2.1.8** DWP are yet to publish a six-month review of the Service and are yet to indicate plans for April 2020.

2.1.9 Summary of the latest position on the expansion of Universal Credit

- Funding to smooth the transition to Universal Credit, including an additional two week run on of existing DWP benefit, will apply from 2020 to help with the gap to customers first Universal Credit payment. NB – Housing Benefit has provided a two week run on since April 2018
- Funding to increase in work allowances - thereby boosting UC payments
- Managed migration of existing cases to commence from November 2020, but only after testing of up to 10,000 claimants from July 2019 at Harrogate and completion set by December 2023
- At time of writing only a handful of selected, volunteered customers have had intensive support to move them to Universal Credit
- Reductions in maximum deductions from Universal Credit – to offset criticisms advance payments were being deducted too quickly and at punitive rates
- For newly self-employed the introduction from September 2019 of a longer, 12 month, grace period before a minimum income floor calculation is applied
- Pensioner Housing Benefit to continue until at least 2023
- DWP has announced a £10 million Universal Credit Transition Fund for outreach programmes to help vulnerable people make Universal Credit claims.
- The fund will be available to partner organisations across the UK, including charities, from April 2020. It will aim to help vulnerable people, including disabled people, care leavers and those with mental health issues, claim Universal Credit as a route into work. It will support innovative ideas for engaging with vulnerable people early, helping them to make timely claims to the new benefit.
- Funding application details were not available at time of writing.

2.2 At a national level the following concerns have been raised:

- How DWP will monitor and report Citizen's Advice performance delivering Universal Support
- Concerns the Harrogate trial is not a meaningful trial, given the claimant population demographics and the intensive support will not be sustainable
- The lack of Managed Migration detailed plans and schedule
- Failure to populate UC systems with legacy systems data – all existing customers for HB will be expected to make a new claim. This is being reviewed.
- Concerns the Managed Migration process will leave customers without benefit during the transfer - DWP adopting a 'who knows me approach'
- The five week wait for UC payments – rent element often lags behind
- Alternative Payment Arrangements and data share for Private Landlords
- Housing Benefit Debt
- LA funding
- Management Information including LA access to UC Information

2.2.1 During July DWP commenced a small scale managed migration trial at Harrogate Jobcentre. This will test:

- The 'who knows me' approach
- methods to 'warm up' customers selected to migrate to UC (no compulsion)
- options to explain the UC claiming process
- how to UC claim – online and evidence requirements
- how to understand monthly UC payments and how to budget

- understanding award letters and customer journal requirements to ensure UC conditionality compliance
- testing pre population of existing customer data
- testing how transitional protection can work
- those participating in the trial will not have their legacy benefit stopped without UC entitlement established
- Parliament is required to consider the results of the trial prior to considering next steps – this is not expected before Summer 2020

2.2.2 On 15TH May 2019 DWP introduced new legislation that means new claims from mixed age couples, where one partner is a pensioner and the other working age, must claim UC and be subject to UC conditionality rules, i.e. required to actively seek work to receive benefit, with certain exceptions. Given benefit rates are higher for existing pensioners, this will have the effect of reducing benefit entitlement. Protections are in place for existing customers until a relevant change in their circumstances.

2.2.3 Universal Credit – new matter arising

- DWP had announced a review of the contract given to Citizen's Advice to provide the Help to Claim UC service for the 2020 – 2021 year would take place to inform options for contract award for the 2021 – 2022 year. To date this has not been completed, DWP stating COVID response has delayed plans. It is not known at this stage what their approach will be to the 2021 – 2022 contract award.
- Due to COVID-19 DWP stopped the Harrogate managed migration pilot. Consequently, a planned report has not gone to Parliament before Summer recess, in turn meaning managed migration plans are on hold. Given UC Programme staff are largely redeployed to UC assessment centres, DWP have not provided any further updates.
- It is anticipated DWP will simply allow cases to naturally migrate to UC when they have a change of circumstances rather than manage migration. It is worth noting managed migration is more challenging for customers, administratively more complex for DWP and LAs, whilst also incurring transitional protection cost when new UC entitlement is less than previous benefit levels.

2.3 Discretionary Housing Payment - new matters arising

2.3.1 Discretionary Housing Payment grant is funded by DWP, designed to help customers remain in their homes or to move to affordable and sustainable accommodation. For the 2020/21 year DWP increased funding to offset the impact of private sector rents increasing above the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates used to calculate Housing Benefit.

2.3.2 Spend continues to be within DWP grant, and we aim to use all the grant to help customers. The main area of expenditure continues to be to assist customers with rent shortfalls, due to restrictions on Housing Benefit rent levels. We work closely with partner Housing Options teams to identify and help customers and we promote the scheme through our stakeholder contacts.

2.4 Benefit Cap – no new matters arising

2.4.1 DWP introduced the reduced Benefit Cap on the 7th November 2016; the maximum family income before the Benefit Cap applies reduced from £26,000 to £20,000 (£13,400 for single adults with no children).

2.4.2 The Benefit Service continues to work with colleagues in Customer Service and Housing Options teams to seek to avoid homelessness and the cost of temporary housing.

- 2.4.3** DWP have provided New Burdens funding to assist Councils with extra administrative costs and have increased Discretionary Housing Payment grants to help customers with the reduction – it should be noted the increase does not cover all the reductions.

2.5 Social rented sector rent restrictions – no new matters arising

- 2.5.1** In August Government finally responded to consultation on funding for supported housing, dropping proposals to move away from a subsidised demand led model to a grant model. For the foreseeable future, supported accommodation, including hostel tenancies, will remain in Housing Benefit and will not move to Universal Credit.

3.0 Welfare Benefit Up-rating April 2020 – no new matters arising

- 3.1** Government have confirmed an end to the four year Benefit up-rating freeze. From April 2020 all Benefits increased by CPI as of September 2019, 1.7% with the State Pension rising by 3.9% due to the 'Triple Lock'.

4.0 Options

- 4.1** The report is for information purposes

5.0 Reasons for recommendations

- 5.1** The report is for information only

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Risk

The report is for information only

6.2 Financial

The report is for information only

6.3 Legal

The report is for information only

6.4 Equality and Diversity

Not applicable.

Background papers: - None

Lead Contact Officer

Name/Post: Adrian Mills – Strategic Manager (Billing & Benefits)

Email: Adrian.mills@angliarevenues.gov.uk