

A G E N D A

ANGLIA REVENUES & BENEFITS PARTNERSHIP JOINT COMMITTEE

DATE & TIME Tuesday, 9th March, 2021 at 11.00 am

VENUE: Virtual meeting via Zoom

For the attention of:

Cllr Philip 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

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>

THIS MEETING IS IN LINE WITH THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND POLICE AND CRIME PANELS (CORONAVIRUS) (FLEXIBILITY OF LOCAL AUTHORITY AND POLICE AND CRIME PANEL MEETINGS) (ENGLAND AND WALES) REGULATIONS 2020

PART A **ITEMS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

1. MINUTES

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 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.

Page(s)
herewith

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Democratic Services
Elizabeth House, Walpole Loke,
Dereham Norfolk, NR19 1EE

Date: Friday, 26 February 2021

Contact: Julie Britton. Democratic Services Officer
Email: julie.britton@breckland.gov.uk

	<u>Page(s) herewith</u>
4. <u>DECLARATIONS</u>	
5. <u>PERFORMANCE REPORT (STANDING ITEM)</u> Report by Stuart Philpot, Strategic Manager (Support Services) ARP.	8 - 40
6. <u>ARP FORECAST FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE 2020-21</u> Report by Alison Chubbock, Chief Accountant & Deputy S151 Officer (BDC).	41 - 45
7. <u>PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK 2021</u> Report by Jo Andrews, Strategic Manager (Revenues) ARP	46 - 58
8. <u>WELFARE REFORM UPDATE (STANDING ITEM)</u> Report by Adrian Mills, Strategic Manager (Billing & Benefits) ARP.	59 - 62
9. <u>FORTHCOMING ISSUES (STANDING ITEM)</u> To note any items.	
10. <u>NEXT MEETING</u> To note the arrangements for the next meeting on Tuesday, 22 June 2021 at 11am.	
11. <u>EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC</u> To consider passing the following resolution: “That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1, 2, 3 & 4 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Act.”	
PART B ITEMS FROM WHICH THE PRESS AND PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED	
12. <u>RISK BASED VERIFICATION (RBV) POLICY REVIEW AND VERIFICATION POLICY 2021-2022</u> Report by Adrian Mills, Strategic Manager (Billing & Benefits) ARP.	63 - 73
13. <u>SUCCESSION PLANNING</u> Report by Paul Corney Head of ARP.	74 - 98

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, 8 December 2020 at 11.00 am
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

PRESENT

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

In Attendance

Jo Andrews	- Strategic Manager (Revenues)
Sam Anthony	- Head of HR & OD
Alison Chubbock	- Chief Accountant (Deputy Section 151 Officer) (BDC)
Paul Corney	- Head of ARP
Brian Mew	- Chief Finance Officer & S151 Officer
Adrian Mills	- Strategic Manager (Billing & Benefits) ARP
Stuart Philpot	- Strategic Manager (Support Services) ARP
Ian Smith	- Finance Manager & S151 Officer (East Cambs)
Greg Stevenson	- Service Manager (Finance & Performance)
Teresa Smith	- Democratic Services Team Leader
Julie Britton	- Democratic Services Officer

Action By

62/20 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 1)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2020 were agreed as a correct record subject to the title of Councillor Kim French (substitute Member) being changed to Miss under those recorded as present.

63/20 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Peter Catchpole, Corporate Director and Chief Finance Officer (S151) for Fenland District Council and Rachael Mann, Assistant Director (Resources & Performance) for West Suffolk District Council.

Sam Anthony, Head of HR & OD for Fenland DC and Greg Stevenson, Service Manager (Finance & Performance) for West Suffolk DC were in attendance as their substitutes.

64/20 URGENT BUSINESS (AGENDA ITEM 3)

None.

65/20 DECLARATIONS (AGENDA ITEM 4)

None declared.

Action By

66/20 PERFORMANCE AND SERVICE UPDATES (STANDING ITEM) (AGENDA ITEM 5)

Stuart Philpot, the Strategic Manager (Support Services) ARP presented the performance and service update report and highlighted the following areas:

Council Tax Collection

The Council Tax collection rates for all partners had reduced due to the pandemic.

Two rounds of 'soft reminders' had been sent out to customers which had had a positive effect on collections.

In October 2020, statutory reminders had been issued. Magistrate Courts had re-opened and would be in session during December and as such Court Hearings had been booked for all authorities.

Fraud and Compliance

£1.5m of fraud had been identified with the majority being due to single persons discounts non-compliance.

Business Rates Collection

All revised targets had been achieved with the exception of East Suffolk showing a £1.7m collection target shortfall. However, since the publication of the report, East Suffolk had collected a further £1.2m reducing the shortfall to £500k under collection target.

For Fenland DC refunds were still outstanding in respect of the NHS Trusts pending appeals.

The Fraud Team had assisted and had been involved with checking the due diligence in respect of the Covid-19 grants for NNDR.

Enforcement

All enforcement visits had been suspended from March to August 2020 due to the pandemic and although the collection rates had since risen, with face-to-face visits now resumed, they were not back to the levels that had been collected the previous year. The Enforcement Team were taking all the necessary precautions in respect of PPE and risk assessments.

ARP Systems and Digital

There had been a significant increase in activity on the ARP website due to the offices being closed for face-to-face visits – up to 60% compared to 2019.

A more collaborative relationship with Capita had been demonstrated recently with the implementation of Total Mobile Software to aid the visiting officers in their work.

Members were then invited to ask questions.

Action By

Referring to fraud and compliance, Councillor French felt that the amount of fraud was quite concerning in respect of single persons discounts and asked how ARP was notified of such fraudulent activities.

In response, Members were informed that such information was captured through the Norfolk Fraud Information hub and through random checks that were carried out, but it could also be captured from notifications from neighbours, friends and even family.

Councillor French assumed that such claimants would have other people living with them and asked how many days a person was allowed to reside at the same property before the single persons discount was removed.

Adrian Mills, the Strategic Manager (Billing & Benefits) ARP explained that a person had to live at the property for a substantial part of the week, any less would be classed as casual. There were checks and balances in place to eliminate such fraudulent activities.

The Vice-Chairman, Councillor Ambrose-Smith referred to benefits and the Government funding of £500 that had been awarded to claimants who had to self-isolate. Within the report he had noted that the demand would outstrip the funding and asked what would happen with this going forward.

The Strategic Manager (Billing & Benefits) ARP advised that the Test & Trace Self Isolation £500 payments were currently scheduled to continue until 31 January 2021; however, the Government was considering an extension to these grants until the end of March 2021. Furthermore, additional programme funding and discretionary funding to meet demand was also being considered as well as the administrative burden on local authorities in terms of coping and distributing this additional funding. Conversations were still on-going. The current demand for the Partnership areas had been at the level forecasted by the Government unlike other parts of the country where such funding had already been outstripped. It was noted that the funding was monitored weekly with the S151 Officers within the Partnership.

The Chairman was pleased that the automated services were increasing year on year.

The report was otherwise noted.

67/20 ARP FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE 2020-21 (AGENDA ITEM 6)

Alison Chubbock, the Chief Accountant & Deputy S151 Officer (BDC) presented the report that provided Members with a full year financial forecast against the budget.

The report had been based on information as of 31 October 2020 and showed an overspend against budget of £522k for the whole of the Partnership. This was mainly due to lost enforcement income that had been seriously affected by impact of the Covid pandemic. However, the forecast had slightly improved since the previous meeting and was moving in the right direction.

Members attention was drawn to the table on page 40 of the agenda pack. Members were assured that although the overspend was quite significant, the majority of that would be compensated from grants that the Government was

Action By

providing to individual authorities to offset the losses from sales fees and charges income.

The appendices on pages 42 and 43 provided further detail on the main variances.

The Chairman and the Vice-Chairman thanked the Chief Accountant for such a detailed report.

The report and appendix were otherwise noted.

68/20 ARP JOINT COMMITTEE PARTNERSHIP BUDGET (AGENDA ITEM 7)

The Chief Accountant & Deputy S151 Officer (BDC) presented the proposed budget for the whole of the Partnership for the next financial year, 2021-22. The report also included indicative future years allocations and highlighted the individual Partners' shares towards the costs.

The budget for next year was £151k lower than 2020-21, mainly due to additional income in respect of parking enforcement work – the detail behind this figure had been highlighted at paragraph 1.5 of the report.

Future budgets from 2022-23 included other efficiency targets to be achieved of £220k.

The recent spending review announced a public sector pay freeze just prior to the publication of the report. Consequently, this budget paper did not include any reduction from this potential change but with many of the Partners' on local pay schemes this would not be reflected in every single Partners' budget. It was likely that there could be a saving of approximately £40k from that pay freeze due to all Partners' making their own decisions; therefore, for next year, a small variance would be shown if that pay freeze came to fruition.

Although the enforcement income continued to be a risk, all services were continuing as normal and the budget had been based on those services as expected.

The Vice-Chairman referred to section 1.4 of the report where it mentioned new parking enforcement work would commence in 2020-21. He asked if this could be explained as he was not aware of this new service. Jo Andrews, the Strategic Manager (Revenues) ARP explained that ARP would be taking on this enforcement work in respect of parking fines for East & West Suffolk Councils. This would operate in the exact same way as council tax and business rates enforcement and an increase in fee collections and income was expected.

The Vice-Chairman also asked a question in respect of no changes being made to the budget setting going forward. The Chief Accountant (BDC) explained that this year had been used as a basis taking account of ARP's performance and continued delivery of services and was comfortable with the proposed budget going forward in such uncertain times.

Having seen the way that the ARP had delivered services during such difficult times, the Chairman felt that the Chief Accountant's assessment of this budget was correct.

Action By

Councillor French had been very interested to hear about the new parking enforcement service. As the Portfolio Holder for Fenland DC, she had been looking into this matter and various meetings had been held and a draft report was being prepared hopefully prior to Christmas. One of the issues discussed during these meetings was how fines that had not been paid were collected and she would be very interested to have further conversations with ARP in respect of this work.

The Chairman felt that there had been much discussion at previous meetings on lessons learnt and transferring skills sets within the Partnership and this new enforcement work could clearly benefit Fenland DC. He was sure that the Strategic Manager (Revenues) ARP would be happy to assist Fenland in any way that she could.

Members were informed that Suffolk County Council delegated authority to East & West Suffolk District Councils who had their own in-house teams to manage such work. Enforcement matters then came to the ARP's Enforcement Team which all Partners would benefit from.

Paul Corney, the Head of ARP suggested that Sam Anthony, the Head of HR & Organisational Development for Fenland District Council speak to the other OIB Members from East & West Suffolk to understand exactly what process they followed that could be of some assistance.

In response, the Head of HR & Organisational Development said that she would be happy to follow that up with OIB Members.

The Chairman thanked the Chief Accountant (BDC) for an excellent report.

RESOLVED that the Partnership budget at Appendix A of the report for 2021-22 be approved.

69/20 ANGLIA REVENUES PARTNERSHIP SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN AND RISK REGISTER (AGENDA ITEM 8)

The Head of ARP presented the Service Delivery Plan that should be agreed by the ARP Joint Committee by the end of December each year and the Risk Register report that had to be reviewed every six months.

Details of the 2019/20 Service Delivery Plan at section 2.1 of the report were highlighted. The Head of ARP felt this was good news, even with the pressures of Covid, ARP had been able to continue its work with the Fraud Team and Recovery Team jointly funded by County Councils and the results of this work had been surprisingly favourable. A number of objectives had been achieved and the Digital workstream had progressed which had released resources for those who could not self-serve.

The priorities of the Revenues and Benefits service were highlighted including the introduction of "Colleagues" which was linked to building talent within the organisation and ending up with an excellent workforce to be able to carry on the good work and succession planning when certain Officers reached retirement age or left the organisation.

The Chairman felt that the last point made in respect of succession planning was appropriate going forward and congratulated all Officers involved for all their hard work and for making the Members' role a great deal easier.

Action By

RESOLVED that:

- the progress in respect of the December 2019 Service Delivery plan be noted; and
- the revised Service Delivery Plan and Risk Register at Appendix B of the report be approved.

70/20 WELFARE REFORM UPDATE (STANDING ITEM) (AGENDA ITEM 9)

Adrian Mills, the Strategic Manager (Billing & Benefits) ARP presented the report.

Members' attention was drawn to paragraph 2.2.3 in respect of Universal Credit.

Members had taken an interest previously in DWP's contract with Citizen's Advice to help provide help to claim Universal Credit service in the current year. DWP had originally stated that a review of this contract would be forthcoming; however, as yet this had still not been completed due to the Covid pandemic and following a number of meetings no further updates had been provided.

Any information received would be shared with OIB Members followed by ARP Joint Committee Members.

It was noted that DWP had stopped the Harrogate managed migration pilot again due to Covid-19 and such plans were still on hold. However, cases where a claimants' circumstances had changed were now being accelerated from Housing Benefit to Universal Credit accordingly – this method was more challenging for customers and administratively more complex for DWP and local authorities.

As far as the spending review was concerned in terms of Universal Credit, Members were aware, as part of the DWP Covid response, had increased Universal Credit rate by £20 per week. However, the spending review had not stated whether this would be continued into the forthcoming financial year although it had been announced by the Secretary of State that it would be reviewed in time for April 2021.

Attention was then drawn to paragraph 2.3, Discretionary Housing Payment.

DWP had increased funding to offset the impact of private sector rents for this year which had been very helpful. Spend continued to be within DWP grant, and all the grant monies would be used to help customers. The main area of expenditure continued to be to assist customers with rent shortfalls, due to restrictions on Housing Benefit rent levels.

Under paragraph 2.4.3 in respect of the Benefit Cap, DWP had provided New Burdens funding to assist Councils with extra administrative costs and had increased Discretionary Housing Payment grants to help customers with the reduction in benefits that had been reduced by £6k based on the maximum family income.

Under section 3 of the report, Government had confirmed an end to the four-

Action By

year Benefit uprating freeze from April 2020. Spending Review had announced that state pensions would increase by 2.5% protected by the triple lock, whilst benefits would increase by the September 2020 inflation rate of 0.5%.

The report was otherwise noted.

71/20 FORTHCOMING ISSUES (STANDING ITEM) (AGENDA ITEM 10)

In a response to a concern in respect of why Breckland Council was taking over the HR services in-house, away from West Suffolk Council without ARP JC Members being informed, the Head of ARP explained the reason that Members had not been made aware was due to the arrangement being between Breckland Council and West Suffolk Council in the form of a Service Level Agreement.

It was agreed that the Operational Improvement Board should discuss the new arrangement.

72/20 NEXT MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 11)

Due to other commitments, it was agreed that the date of the next would be changed to either the week before or the week after 16 March 2021.

The new date would be confirmed in due course, all Members were content with it being brought forward to Tuesday, 9 March 2021 if suitable for Officers.

The Chairman took the opportunity to wish everyone a very Happy Christmas.

The meeting closed at 11.45 am

CHAIRMAN



Joint Committee Performance Report January 2021



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All Partner Councils Combined



Business Rates Collection					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Jan-21	
2020/21	£ 40,382,156	£ 80,234,076	£ 122,593,614	£ 138,025,660	●
Target	£ 38,080,964	£ 78,313,282	£ 118,246,156	£ 130,783,947	●
2019/20	£ 68,526,436	£ 137,479,211	£ 179,586,617	£ 243,658,978	●
Year End Target				£148,138,900	●

Council Tax Collection					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Jan-21	
2020/21	£127,454,324	£251,468,250	£379,825,898	£420,737,018	●
Target	£131,101,223	£258,456,805	£386,585,468	£428,055,976	●
2019/20	£125,766,695	£247,998,105	£330,460,654	£439,901,785	●
Year End Target				£454,258,929	●

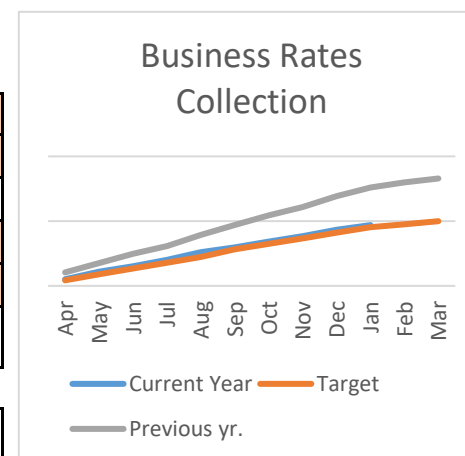
Number of Electronic Forms Received					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Jan-21	
2020/21	12,089	23,189	37,184	42,650	●
2019/20	9,375	19,525	28,498	36,405	●
Year End Target				36405	●

Fraud and Compliance	Q1	Q2	Q3	Jan-21	Yr Target
Single Person Discount Fraud	£529,263	£942,485	£1,290,452	£1,347,479	£500,000
Local Council Tax Support	£6,050	£20,001	£63,272	£80,677	£150,000
Tenancy Fraud	£6,480	£105,960	£295,200	£295,200	£400,000
Other (Council Tax and NDR)	£113,556	£301,455	£373,578	£385,090	£250,000
Fraud Identified	£655,349	£1,369,901	£2,022,502	£2,108,446	£1,300,000

Performance Information January 2021

Business Rates

Business Rates Collection					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Jan-21	
2020/21	£ 6,046,513	£ 11,935,167	£ 17,330,233	£ 18,767,785	●
Target	£ 5,351,728	£ 11,332,757	£ 16,430,763	£ 18,111,294	
Refunds	£ 403,258	£ 1,240,252	£ 1,567,290	£ 1,834,964	
2019/20	£ 9,936,479	£ 18,830,045	£ 27,763,428	£ 30,373,661	●
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

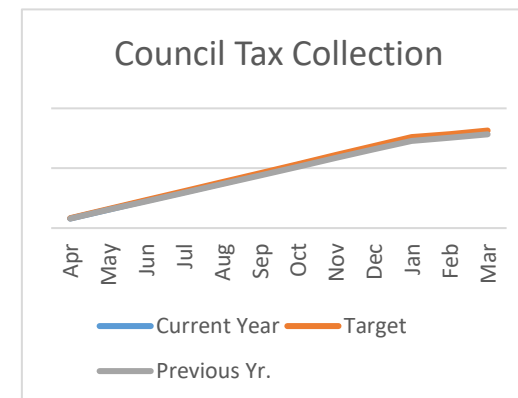
Collection is on target for the current financial year. Targets have been amended to reflect the grants which will be received this year in respect of the rate reliefs funded by Government.

Further recovery action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £2,000. Enforcement action in 2021/21 has resulted in collection of £23,551.

Council Tax

Council Tax Collection					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Jan-21	
2020/21	£ 22,830,485	£ 44,806,050	£ 67,828,605	£ 75,134,940	●
Target	£ 23,306,834	£ 45,717,564	£ 68,527,467	£ 75,916,247	
Refunds	£ 204,527	£ 489,303	£ 726,141	£ 857,551	
2019/20	£ 22,364,957	£ 43,876,573	£ 65,767,484	£ 72,880,877	●

Year End Target	£81,463,941	●
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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 £781,307. 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 were unable to take our normal action to recover outstanding amounts through the Magistrates Court until recently. 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 £52,569. Enforcement action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £364,711.

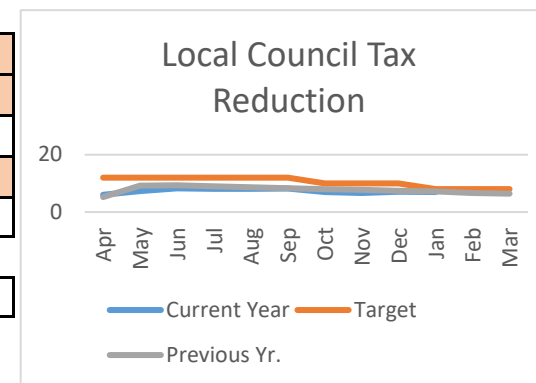
Charging Orders have been obtained to secure £368,524 debt.

Local Council Tax Reduction

Days to process Local Council Tax Support

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Jan-21	
2020/21	8.26	8.20	7.04	6.97	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	9.34	8.26	7.46	7.21	●

Year End Target	8	●
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Description

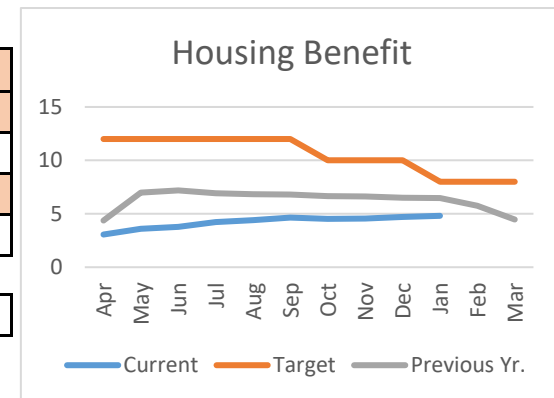
This indicator measures the average year to date number of days to process Council Tax reduction new claims and change of circumstances.

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	Q3	Jan-21	
2020/21	3.77	4.64	4.72	4.81	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	7.19	6.81	6.50	6.47	●
Year End Target		8		●	



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Description

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

Narrative

This indicator is currently being met and is expected to achieve target at the end of the year.

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 continue to proactively 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 have also been working with NNDR in post assurance business rates grants and also have investigations underway in respect of false applications.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Jan-21
Single Person Discount Fraud	£117,886	£236,327	£304,536	£313,542
Local Council Tax Support	£1,346	£5,477	£23,403	£30,900
Tenancy Fraud	£0	£0	£93,000	£93,000
Other (Council Tax and NDR)	£53,563	£65,107	£84,089	£84,089
Fraud Identified	£172,794	£306,911	£505,027	£521,531



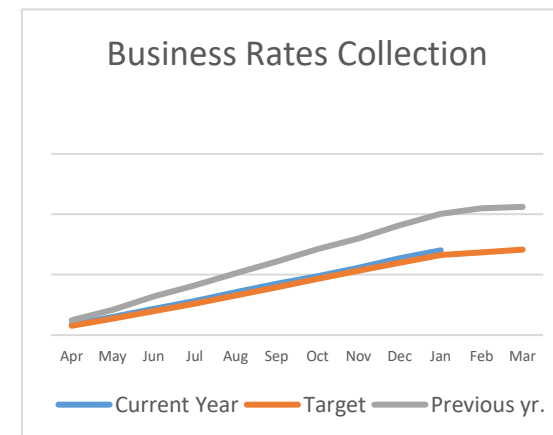
Performance Information January 2021



Business Rates

Business Rates Collection					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Jan-21	
2020/21	£ 4,321,819	£ 8,513,137	£ 12,702,067	£ 14,038,037	●
Target	£ 3,978,590	£ 7,915,784	£ 11,969,953	£ 13,253,472	
Refunds	£ 219,614	£ 429,251	£ 679,549	£ 750,418	
2019/20	£ 6,372,977	£ 12,173,009	£ 18,185,963	£ 20,067,243	●

Full Year Target	£14,153,152	●
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Description

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

Narrative

Collection is on target for the current financial year. 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 £12,928.

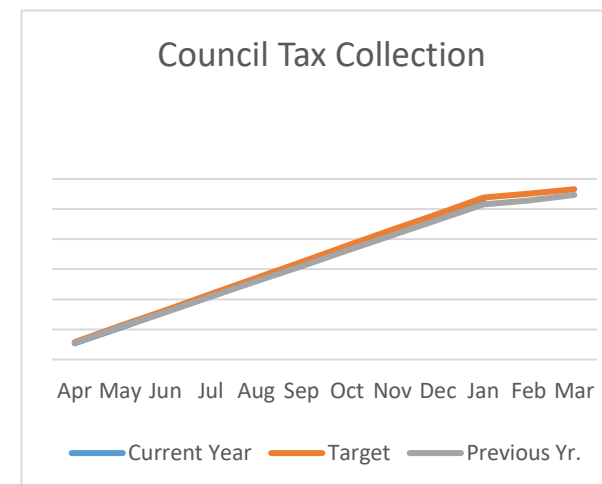


Council Tax



Council Tax Collection					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Jan-21	
2020/21	£ 15,859,812	£ 31,561,919	£ 47,847,998	£ 53,015,472	●
Target	£ 16,420,947	£ 32,428,966	£ 48,431,329	£ 53,788,076	
Refunds	£ 149,975	£ 342,403	£ 522,217	£ 628,623	
2019/20	£ 15,730,723	£ 31,067,215	£ 46,402,469	£ 51,531,277	●

Year End Target	£ 56,565,439	●
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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 £772,604. 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 were unable to take our normal action to recover outstanding amounts through the Magistrates Court until recently. 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 £21,625. Enforcement action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £165,576.

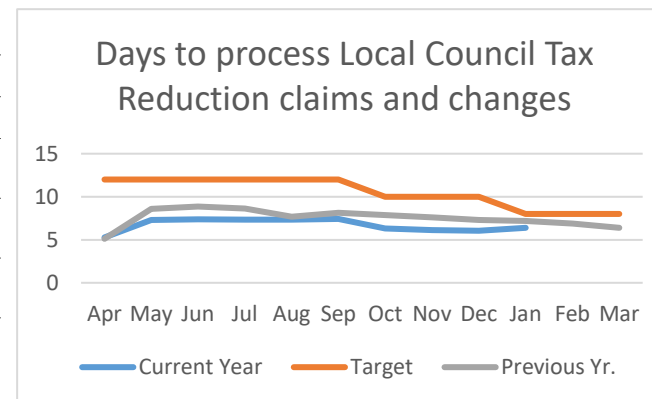
Charging Orders have been obtained to secure £316,389 debt.



Local Council Tax Reduction



Days to process Local Council Tax Support					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Jan-21	
2020/21	7.37	7.42	6.03	6.39	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	8.86	8.12	7.31	7.18	●



Year End Target	8	●
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Description

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

Narrative

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.



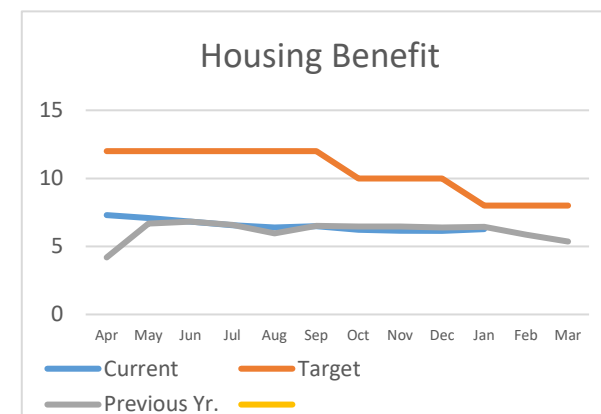
Housing Benefit



Days to process Housing Benefit					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Jan-21	
2020/21	6.82	6.48	6.14	6.26	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	6.82	6.50	6.38	6.43	●

19

Year End Target	8	●
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Description

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

Narrative

This indicator is currently being met and is expected to achieve target at the end of the year.



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.

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 and an update is expected in terms of its progression and procurement of software. Once operating this will align the work of the fraud team across the partnership.

20

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Jan-21
Single Person Discount Fraud	£27,997	£40,118	£61,177	£69,908
Local Council Tax Support	£2,122	£2,610	£6,674	£6,706
Tenancy Fraud	£0	£93,000	£186,000	£186,000
Other (Council Tax and NDR)	£0	£101,939	£114,400	£117,909
Fraud Identified	£30,119	£237,667	£368,250	£380,524

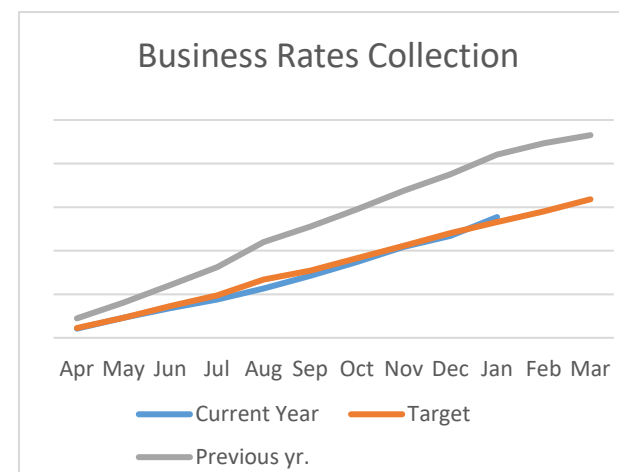
Performance Information January 2021

Business Rates

Business Rates Collection					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Jan-21	
2020/21	£ 13,586,679	£ 28,476,749	£ 46,751,882	£ 55,423,424	●
Target	£ 14,599,314	£ 30,783,361	£ 48,034,963	£ 53,175,287	
Refunds	£ 613,691	£ 1,733,063	£ 2,486,253	£ 2,952,095	
2019/20	£ 24,147,964	£ 51,103,221	£ 75,034,979	£ 84,099,429	●

21

Year End Target	63,596,344	●
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Description

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

Narrative

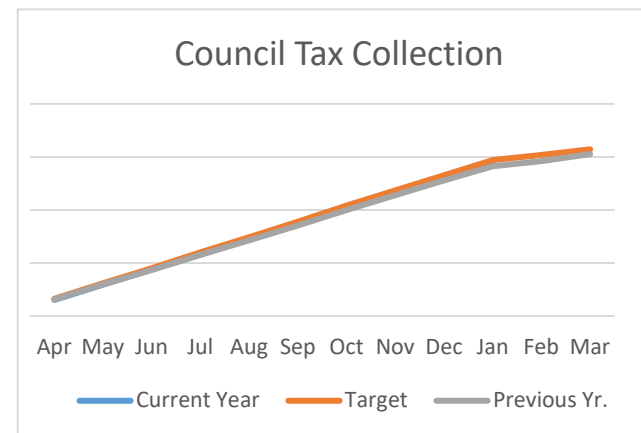
Collection is on target for the current financial year. Targets have been amended to reflect the grants which will be received this year in respect of the rate reliefs funded by Government.

Further recovery action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £62,119. Enforcement action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £18,651.

Council Tax

Council Tax Collection					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Jan-21	
2020/21	£ 43,986,884	£ 86,547,244	£ 130,268,131	£ 144,107,775	●
Target	£ 45,144,195	£ 88,858,483	£ 132,855,610	£ 146,903,264	
Refunds	£ 464,206	£ 1,116,190	£ 1,710,530	£ 1,973,509	
2019/20	£ 43,402,134	£ 85,413,139	£ 127,711,105	£ 141,221,392	●

Year End Target	157,132,596	●
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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

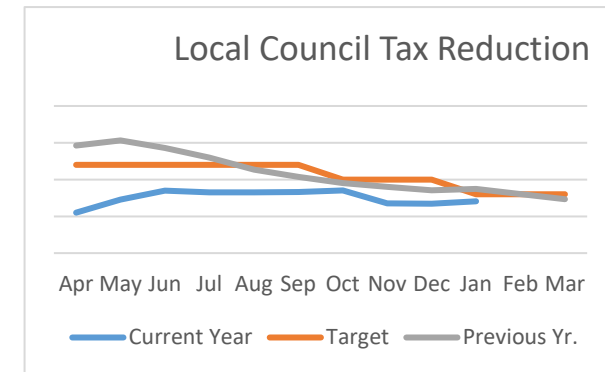
Collection is behind target by £2,795,490. The Government is funding a hardship scheme which has provided up to £150 to each LCTRS recipient of working age. Targets have been adjusted to reflect these payments. Whilst Covid has affected some customers ability to pay, we have only recently been able to 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 £120,126. Enforcement action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £555,052.

Local Council Tax Reduction

Days to process Local Council Tax Support					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Jan-21	
2020/21	8.49	8.32	6.70	7.03	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	14.29	10.36	8.55	8.71	●

Year End Target	8	●
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23

Description

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

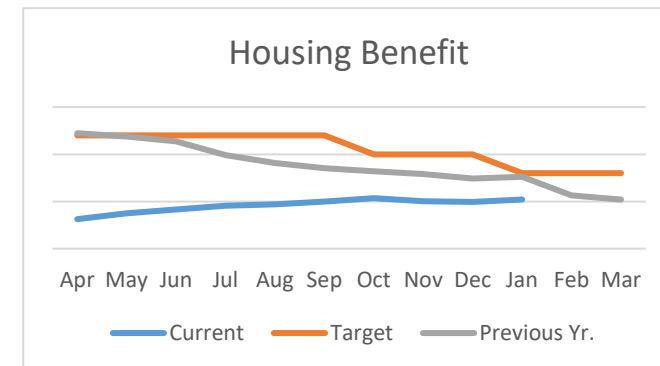
Narrative

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	Q3	Jan-21	
2020/21	4.16	4.98	4.95	5.22	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	11.36	8.52	7.42	7.62	●

Year End Target	8	●
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24

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.

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.

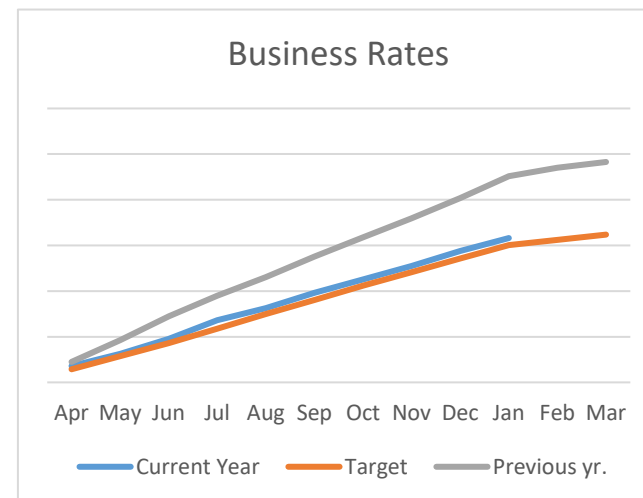
The team have also assisted NNDR in due diligence checks of businesses applying for COVID 19 government grants.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Jan-21
Single Person Discount Fraud	£191,318	£336,805	£467,765	£490,103
Local Council Tax Support	£254	£2,365	£10,695	£14,602
Tenancy Fraud	£0	£0	£0	£0
Other (Council Tax and NDR)	£6,353	£14,060	£23,574	£23,574
Fraud Identified	£197,925	£353,230	£502,035	£528,279

Performance Information January 2021

Business Rates

Business Rates Collection					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Jan-21	
2020/21	£ 4,752,965	£ 9,815,866	£ 14,405,039	£ 15,805,427	●
Target	£ 4,315,013	£ 9,028,512	£ 13,577,091	£ 15,017,565	
Refunds	£ 380,024	£ 767,676	£ 1,114,748	£ 1,277,607	
2019/20	£ 7,228,152	£ 13,789,980	£ 20,173,070	£ 22,580,935	●



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Year End Target	£16,182,693	●
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Description

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

Narrative

Collection is on target for the current financial year.

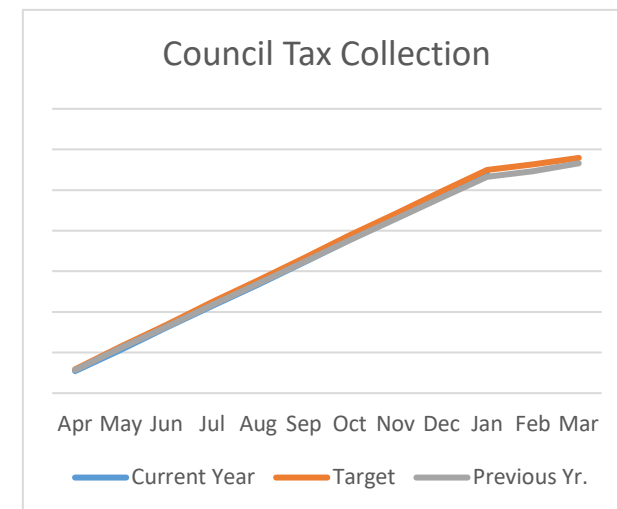
There have been claims by NHS Trusts for charitable rate relief which have been subject to a High Court appeal. If successful this could result in a backdated refund of £1.686M. The High Court have rejected the claim that the NHS Trusts are charities, however the NHS trusts are now appealing this decision.

Further recovery action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £111,204. Enforcement action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £50,262.

Council Tax

Council Tax Collection					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Jan-21	
2020/21	£ 16,234,901	£ 32,182,036	£ 48,651,700	£ 53,941,084	●
Target	£ 16,835,316	£ 33,271,032	£ 49,631,461	£ 54,918,920	
Refunds	£ 137,534	£ 395,346	£ 613,237	£ 721,256	
2019/20	£ 16,330,949	£ 32,276,827	£ 48,152,964	£ 53,278,780	●

Year End Target	£57,913,023	●
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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 £977,836. 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.

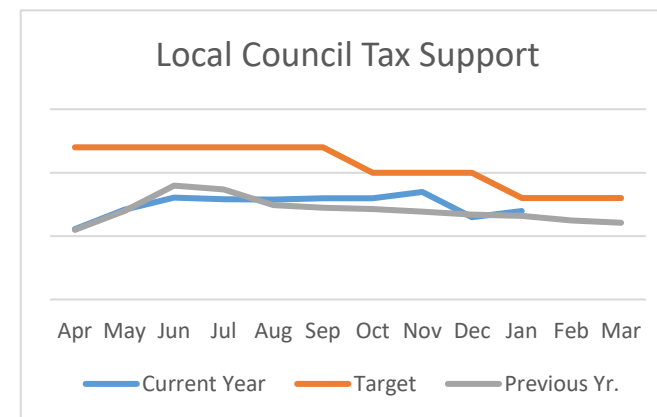
Further recovery action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £53,413. Enforcement action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £286,136.

Charging Orders have been obtained to secure £321,696 debt.

Local Council Tax Reduction

Days to process Local Council Tax Support					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Jan-21	
2020/21	8.03	7.98	6.49	6.97	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	8.98	7.24	6.70	6.58	●

Year End Target	8	●
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Description

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

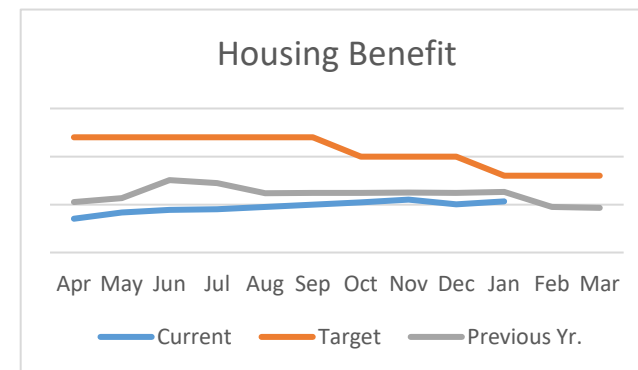
Narrative

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	Q3	Jan-21	
2020/21	4.43	4.98	5.01	5.33	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	7.54	6.20	6.20	6.30	●

Year End Target	8	●
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Description

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

Narrative

This indicator is currently being met and is expected to achieve target at the end of the year.

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 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. An update is expected in terms of its progression and procurement of software. Once operating this will align the work of the fraud team across the partnership.

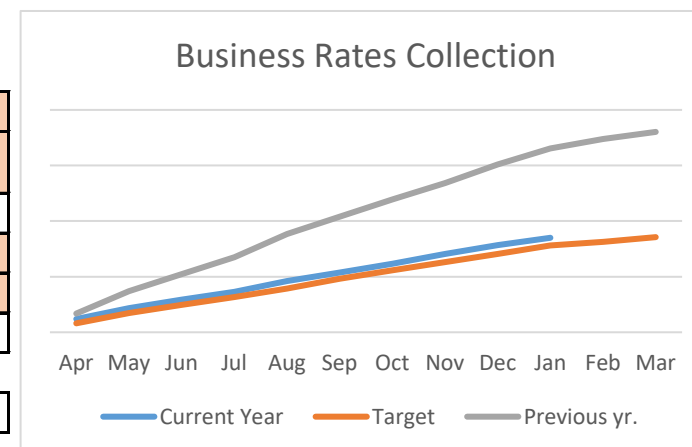
30

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Jan-21
Single Person Discount Fraud	£51,619	£99,378	£140,717	£152,158
Local Council Tax Support	£0	£2,145	£2,680	£4,459
Tenancy Fraud	£0	£0	£0	£0
Other (Council Tax and NDR)	£48,463	£93,122	£120,772	£128,774
Fraud Identified	£100,082	£194,644	£264,168	£285,391

Business Rates

Business Rates Collection					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Jan-21	
2020/21	£ 11,674,180	£ 21,493,157	£ 31,404,393	£ 33,990,987	●
Target	£ 9,836,319	£ 19,252,868	£ 28,233,386	£ 31,226,329	
Refunds	£ 887,279	£ 1,617,524	£ 2,212,623	£ 2,623,135	
2019/20	£ 20,840,864	£ 41,582,956	£ 60,433,764	£ 66,190,218	●

Year End Target	34,227,291	●
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Description

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

Narrative

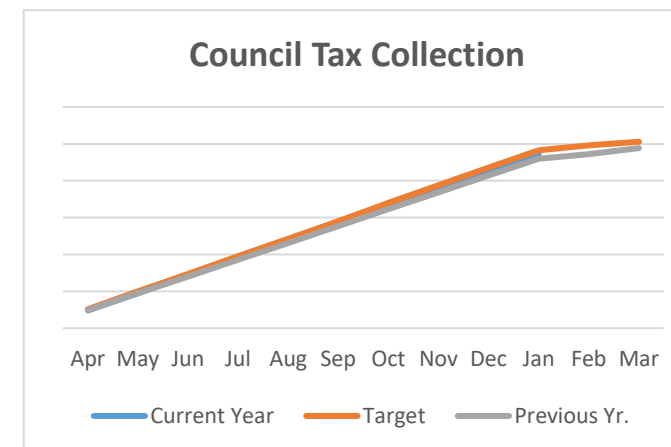
Collection is on target for the current financial year.

There have been claims by NHS Trusts for charitable rate relief which 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 £15,899. Enforcement action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £58,084.

Council Tax Collection					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Jan-21	
2020/21	£ 28,542,242	£ 56,371,002	£ 85,229,464	£ 94,537,748	●
Target	£ 29,393,932	£ 58,180,760	£ 87,139,600	£ 96,529,469	
Refunds	£ 281,783	£ 637,124	£ 1,043,597	£ 1,244,983	
2019/20	£ 27,937,932	£ 55,364,351	£ 82,920,290	£ 91,857,367	●

Year End Target	101,183,930	●
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33

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 £1,991,722. 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.

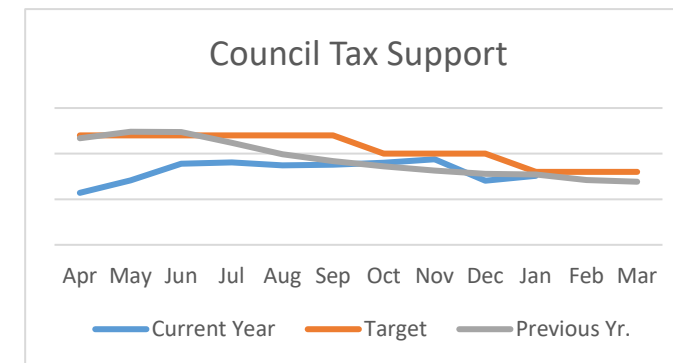
Further recovery action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £92,302. Enforcement action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £377,157.

Charging Orders have been obtained to secure £463,620 debt.

Days to process Local Council Tax Support

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Jan-21	
2020/21	8.91	8.79	7.04	7.56	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	12.36	9.18	7.77	7.72	●

Year End Target	8	●
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Description

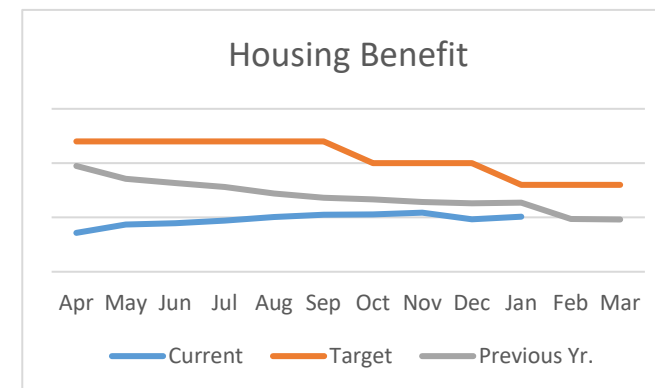
This indicator measures the average number of days to process Council Tax reduction new claims and change of circumstances.

Narrative

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	Q3	Jan-21	
2020/21	4.47	5.24	4.82	5.08	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	8.16	6.80	6.30	6.35	●
Year End Target		8			●



34

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.

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 continue to assist in both pre and post assurance of businesses entitled to the NNDR government business rates grant scheme. The team have been working closely with the Internal Audit team to carry out the assurance work.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Jan-21
Single Person Discount Fraud	£140,444	£229,857	£316,258	£321,767
Local Council Tax Support	£2,327	£7,405	£19,821	£24,011
Tenancy Fraud	£6,480	£12,960	£16,200	£16,200
Other (Council Tax and NDR)	£5,177	£27,227	£30,743	£30,743
Fraud Identified	£154,428	£277,449	£383,022	£392,721

Service Updates as at January 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 lockdowns 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. The risk assessment was reviewed at the beginning of January due to the increased in transmission of Covid 19. 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 and we are due to receive our first cases shortly

This year we have collected £2.419M compared to £4.186M 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 £544,540K in total has been received compared to £1.103M at the same point last year. We have £1.952 M debt secured through Charging Orders.

Funding has been secured from Norfolk & Suffolk County Council for the forthcoming financial year in respect of this work. 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 worked hard to bring the outstanding work down to near normal levels, although with the delayed recovery cycle, continuation of business grants and preparation for the new financial year it remains a challenge. A new set of business grants was announced for the recent lockdown and this will again increase the volume of work for the team. In January we experienced a significant increase in incoming work with a consequent increase in the amount of work outstanding compared to the last financial year. However, again the team has worked hard to bring the outstanding work down to the level seen at the same point last year.

At the time of preparing this update a budget is planned for 3 March 2021 and we are expecting an announcement regarding the support Government will be providing businesses in 2021/22. Annual billing has been moved so that it is now planned to take place on the following weekend with the intention that any rate reliefs announced can be added to the annual rate demands.

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).

Council Tax

As expected Covid -19 has had an impact on collection, despite the application of the hardship fund payments to accounts. Prior to recommencing Statutory Reminders in August, for customers in arrears with their Council Tax payments, we had offered the option of a two month payment break to provide more flexibility during Covid-19. An online form had 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. We have sent 2 rounds of 'soft reminders' which have had a positive effect on collection. This was in addition to updating our website and phone message to provide help and support to those struggling to pay through this difficult time and we continue to signpost customers to claim Universal Credit and Council Tax Support.

The Magistrates Courts reopened at the end of last year and have stayed open during the latest lockdown; we have Court hearings booked for all Authorities.

Demand for council tax billing continues to be significantly greater than last year, with the third lockdown causing increased demand as a direct result of the pandemic. We are also seeing increased demand attributed to a combination of recommencing statutory reminders, increases in Universal Credit data share, significant numbers of house moves as people seek to take advantage of the stamp duty holiday and low interest rates, as well as the impact of the Track and Trace Self Isolation payment scheme. Whilst outstanding work continues to be below the highest levels it reached last year, it had increased, peaking in January. However, since January an improvement plan has delivered a 50% reduction in outstanding work as well as a 80% reduction in changes of addresses outstanding, as we continue to bring work up to date in preparation for annual billing. In particular, change of address which were taking over a month are now being processed in less than two weeks, with applications for discounts and exemptions now taking less than a month.

Further, the project to introduce the generic Council Tax Billing Officer role, which provides a resilient team who have been able to switch between billing and benefits to help cope with ever changing workloads and priorities during the pandemic, has provided increased flexibility to the use of our resources as we aim to continue the reduction in outstanding work.

A new statutory provision called "Breathing space" is being introduced on 4 May 2021. This gives debtors a 60 day moratorium from recovery action for their debts. Preparations are being made to our processes and systems to ensure we can comply with the new legislation.

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 third COVID-19 lockdown that started on the 26th December 2020 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 2020 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 our software 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 have continued to award a payment to every new working age Council Tax Support customer and are monitoring expenditure to ensure the fund for each Council is neither overspent or has a plan in place to fully spend the fund, either this year or the next.

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, especially with the substantial increase in positive cases since the end of last year, linked to the third national lockdown. The scheme has now been extended by three months to 30th June 2021 and now includes provision for parents of school age children required to self-isolate to apply for a payment.

ARP Systems and Digital

There continues to be a significant increase in activity on the ARP website 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. As at 6th January 2021 with the national lockdown in place for an undetermined period, the ARP continue to operate with working from home across the partnership.

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.

A full end to end testing of the Annual Billing process for each of the partners begins in January and will be carried out in live from the last week in February. The ARP are using Critiqom for the printing and mailing of the bills and benefits notifications, maximising the postage discount on the bulk mailing.

Fraud and Compliance

The Fraud Team having had a successful prosecution regarding tenancy fraud continue to work with social housing providers in an attempt to expand the commercial aspect of their investigation service.

With new restrictions in place by Central Government and with the increased cases of Covid-19 infections the fraud team have reviewed 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 the 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. An imminent update is expected with regards to the project. Norfolk County Council and now Suffolk County Council have committed to continue providing funding until March 2022. 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 2020/2021 Breckland Council Premium matches continue to be above expectation.

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. A number of sanctions have now been conducted using this process.

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

It remains the case that, 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. Since the 28 August the ARP's customer strategy team (the partners' customer service heads) have started to map out how best ARP can support customer service teams' new, emerging operating models.

The ARP's customer strategy team are continuing to complete a gap analysis, and a set of plans for closing that gap. We have started discussions 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 although these discussions have been suspended for the moment until Year end bills and letters have been sent out. 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, 16 March 2021

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 January 2021 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 quarter 4, but this is a risk and therefore the income forecast may change.

The forecast at this stage of the year shows an overspend against budget of £492k 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. £20k is earmarked for projects in progress this year and there is a further £139k 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	£68k	(£83k)
East Cambs	£23k	(£39k)
East Suffolk	£221k	(£201k)
Fenland	£91k	(£80k)
West Suffolk	£89k	(£106k)
TOTAL	£492k	(£509k)

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: 07967 325037

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 January 2021

Description	Approved Budget 2020/21 £	Forecast Actuals 2020/21 £	Forecast Variance Over/(Under) £	Variance %	Notes
Employee Related Costs	9,501,073	9,289,057	(212,016)	(2.23)	1
Premises Related Costs	285,440	269,740	(15,700)	(5.50)	
Transport Related Costs	149,856	101,029	(48,827)	(32.58)	2
Supplies & Services	1,819,791	1,745,280	(74,511)	(4.09)	3
Support Services	555,000	509,497	(45,503)	(8.20)	4
Income	(2,502,367)	(1,613,836)	888,531	(35.51)	5
TOTAL PARTNERSHIP COSTS	9,808,793	10,300,767	491,973	5.02	6

Variance Notes

1. The under spend is due to posts that are vacant and these have been carried forward into savings that will show in the 2021/22 budget
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 & 4. More use of the digital Critiqom service has resulted in the underspend in the budget for postages.
5. The shortfall in income is due to less Enforcement work carried out over the 10 month period due to the current situation. The forecasted outturn assumes that the level of work will be back to budgeted expectations for the remainder of 20/21. It is assumed the enforcement agents visits will continue and courts will take place.
6. 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 Teams integration	0	20,000	0
Total	0	20,000	0
Unallocated	139,509	0	0
Grand Total	139,509	20,000	0

The committed transformation funding is £20k. The remaining balance of £140k will be used for future projects.

Bailiff income to be reclaimed	2020/21
Breckland	(82,484)
East Cambs	(38,851)
East Suffolk	(200,971)
Fenland	(80,480)
West suffolk	(106,287)
	(509,073)

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

ANGLIA REVENUES PARTNERSHIP

Report of Jo Andrews (Strategic Revenues Manager)

To: ARP Joint Committee, 9th March 2021

Subject: **Performance Framework**

Purpose: To agree a performance framework

Recommendation(s):

- To agree the indicators identified, targets, tolerance levels and level of reporting
- To agree use of Dashboard

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 In the last financial year West Suffolk Audit carried out a consultancy exercise to consider Performance governance, targets, monitoring and reporting. This piece of work concluded that Performance Management should be reviewed and expanded with particular emphasis on the customer journey.
- 1.1.2 We currently have access to a wide range of data but a consistent approach to reporting against agreed targets which reflects our strategic priorities is needed.
- 1.1.3 All teams reviewed their objectives against our strategic priorities and identified the critical success factors for meeting those objectives. Consideration was then given to the targets/measures needed to monitor progress against those objectives (at individual and team reporting level).
- 1.1.4 Each indicator was reviewed to determine how it should be calculated, whether the source data was available, suggested target and rational and the level of reporting. Work has been ongoing to obtain the necessary data.
- 1.1.5 The Customer strategy team met recently to consider the targets which should be included from a customer journey perspective. Several have been included in the Performance Framework, however some suggestions relating to avoidable customer contact will need to be developed and added to the Framework when available.

2.0 The Framework

- 2.1 The performance framework is shown at Appendix 1 and contains details of the targets and measures which have been identified and the strategic priority they relate to.
- 2.2 The list of targets and measures provides details of the indicator, the suggested target, tolerance levels and the reporting level.
- 2.3 Most of the projects we are undertaking form part of the customer journey and will therefore be reported separately to OIB as part of the regular customer journey update and to Joint Committee when required.

3.0 Presentation of performance data

- 3.1 Consideration has been given to the collation and presentation of the data. It is not suggested that we change the presentation of the performance information to Joint Committee as it was reviewed relatively recently and also contains a highlight report.
- 3.2 Where any measures fall outside of tolerance, they can be reported by exception to OIB and Joint Committee where appropriate
- 3.3 It is suggested that we present the monthly performance data to OIB in the form of a dashboard.
- 3.4 A feature of excel has been identified which will take raw performance data and create graphs and statistics to form an interactive dashboard.
- 3.5 A dashboard is being created for each of our strategic priorities. So, for example, the sustainability dashboard will contain information relating to collection and the customer dashboard will contain information relating to volumes of correspondence, speed of processing and telephone handling.
- 3.6 In time the aim would be to share the dashboard with OIB through SharePoint but in the meantime, it can be shared by email

4.0 Options

- a. To agree the measures & targets identified and level of reporting
- b. To agree the use of dashboards
- c. To determine a different approach

5.0 Reasons for recommendations

- 5.1 The dashboards provide a visual way of recording performance. They are being constructed so that as much as possible each Authority will be able to see their own data and that of the other partners. They are intended as a “living” document and new indicators and information can be added (or removed) when required. If set up in this way there will be less resource required to produce performance data.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Risk

Not applicable

6.2 Financial

In the long term will reduce resource required to produce performance statistics

6.3 Legal

Not applicable

6.4 Equality and Diversity

Not applicable.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Draft performance framework

Lead Contact Officers

Name/Jo Andrews, Strategic Revenues Manager

Email: jo.andrews@angliarevenues.gov.uk

Performance Management Framework

Introduction

This document sets out the arrangements for effective performance management at Anglia Revenues Partnership. This will help us ensure we achieve our objectives by setting out how we plan and organise our resources to achieve the things we want to do as detailed in our vision and strategic priorities.

Performance management

Performance Management is part of our day to day operation to ensure we deliver the best quality service within the available resource. It is also about improving services and applies to everyone in the organisation.

Performance management follows the sequence of Plan  Action  Review

- **Plan** means being clear about what we are setting out to achieve and how we are going to achieve it
- **Action** means putting our plans into action in the most efficient and effective way
- **Review** means monitoring results to ensure that:
 - we achieve what was planned and to the agreed standard
 - we can compare our performance with our past achievements to show trends
 - we have relevant and timely information to feed back into the planning process
 - we can inform stakeholders accordingly

Our Performance Management Framework sets out how we put this into practice.

Plan

Performance Management begins with a clear Vision and Strategic Priorities supported by our agreed values. These are set out at **Appendix A**.

Each year a service plan is developed with clear responsibilities for delivery linked to the strategic priorities. This is supported through the performance appraisal scheme with targets linked to team and organisational targets and also with training and development through the annual training plan.

A summary of performance management roles is shown below

Performance Management Roles

Who	Role	When
Joint Committee	Approve ARP Plans & Strategies	Annually
OIB	Agree plans and strategies for JC approval Monitor progress	Annually
Strategic Management	Producing plans & strategies for OIB agreement Implement Plans & strategies Monitor progress	As required
Operation Managers	Monitor service area performance Taking corrective action	Continuous

Performance Management Framework

Team Leaders	Monitor individual performance Giving feedback to staff	Continuous
All employees	Individual performance, including agreeing personal goals Giving feedback - contributing to service improvement Responsible for the quality of all data processed.	Continuous

Action

Services are delivered in accordance with our strategies and plans, having regard to the following:

- Service Standards – to inform the minimum level of service
- Targets – to achieve planned improvement in service levels
- Measures – to monitor service delivery and help focus attention on areas in need of improvement

Appendix B - lists the performance measures and indicators

Review

Feedback and other information generated in delivering services enables us to actively monitor performance and report as necessary to Joint Committee, OIB and Strategic Management, Operational teams, individuals, members of the public and external agencies. This is undertaken in accordance with the frequencies shown below:

Performance Monitoring Reports

Service Area/Performance Information	Measure/Indicator			Responsible
		Freq	Where	
Finance	Budget	Quarterly	JC	Breckland Finance
		Quarterly	OIB	Breckland Finance
		Monthly	SMT/Finance Officers	Breckland Finance/SMT
Performance measures	Collection/HB&LCTRS processing/Fraud	Quarterly	JC	SMT
	Dashboard	Monthly	OIB	SMT
PDR's	Individual Targets	Annually	All	Managers
Audit reports	Internal controls	Annually	OIB/SMT	Audit Teams from each LA
Service Plan	Progress	Annually	JC	SMT
Risk Register	Review	Annually	JC	SMT

Reviewing and taking corrective action are essential. Action could include any of the following:

Performance Management Framework

- Reassessing the need for a particular service
- Re-designing standards, measures and targets
- Reviewing systems and processes
- Re-evaluating resource requirements

Customer feedback is used to support the review process.



Anglia Revenues Partnership

Strategy

Our Mission

To share resources to provide fair and accessible revenues and benefits services to our communities. To maximise benefit entitlement and engage in ethical revenue collection, treating our colleagues and customers with courtesy, understanding and respect.

Our Values

**Positive
Engagement**

**Thinking
Dynamically**

**Efficient and
Excellent**

**Taking
Pride**

**Respect and
Integrity**

Our Strategic Themes



Colleagues



Customers



Digital



Relationships



Sustainability

Our Vision

**An engaged,
highly skilled
team**

**Satisfied
customers**

**Integrated Self-
Service across
all functions**

**Excellent,
harmonised
services**

**Balanced
budget and
sustainable
revenue**

Commentary on our strategic themes



Colleagues

Our operations rely on the people who make up our team, both directly within the partnership and in fellow service areas. We will develop our people professionally and pursue a comprehensive organisational development plan.

- Our human resources function is an integral part of the organisation, and helps managers and teams create a more productive, efficient, collaborative and responsive operation.
- We will design an agile organisation that can respond to increasing change in the delivery of core services for our partners.
- ARP serves as a rallying point for recruitment to its specialised roles, with our human resources management coordinating provision across multiple employing partners.
- We develop and pursue strategies for recruitment, succession planning, career pathways, training, workforce culture and engagement and health and wellbeing.
- We actively support and equip remote working where it improves productivity and engagement.
- We aspire to create supportive, inviting, well-equipped and well-maintained workplaces that support everybody's day-to-day work, and provide all colleagues with the tools they need to do their jobs.



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.

- We guide people proactively towards, and provide access to and administer housing benefits, council tax reduction, discounts, exemptions, and discretionary support.
- We strive to make all customer interactions as convenient and expeditious as is feasible, and will work to bring as many interactions as possible within agreed timescales.
- We ensure all residents and businesses are informed of their council tax, business rates, or recovery status, fully and accurately, and on a timely basis.
- We support businesses and other non-domestic occupants with high-quality business rates services and administer business improvement districts.
- We will maximise the value of our expertise and advice to economic development work.



Digital

We will aim to increase our 'digital by default' service including full, partner-integrated self-service. We will use automation to speed processing and release our teams to provide face-time for the customers who need it.

- We will develop digital products that integrate with partner systems and enhance convenience for customers.
- Our main objective with digital is to release colleagues to provide face-time for the customers who need it.
- We will evaluate services on the presumption that they should be automated and/or accessible through self-service.
- It will be necessary to justify any process remaining manual and/or assisted, and to review these justifications on a regular basis.
- Digital change projects will be led through an approved lifecycle framework, with project managers identified.
- Every digital project should respond to a clear business need, in ways that limit over-reliance on single suppliers.
- We will use our partnership to pool digital capability such as web development or design resources.
- We collaborate to improve the scope and quality of our digital offer, in terms of integration, automation, self-service convenience and other fields.



Relationships

We are a partnership of five district councils, pooling resources and sharing best practice to share the provision of revenues and benefits services, offering greater returns on investment in change and innovation projects.

- Partnership oversight rests with a joint committee of elected members, and an operational improvement board, consisting of partners' senior officers and the partnership's strategic management team.
- We balance the opportunities of joint working with local requirements.
- We provide our partners with expert policy advice, analysis and forecasting for revenues and benefits.
- We collaborate with other functions (e.g. customer service, housing, economic development), other local authorities, the third sector and central government to improve our core service offer.
- We work through other local authorities, central government, product user groups and professional bodies to influence policy at all levels.
- We bring together a set of function support teams covering customer service, communications, finance and so on to ensure best practice, check our work with partners' priorities, and pool resources.
- We seek to be integral to all partners, regardless of location or employer.



We are organisationally designed to improve the financial and environmental sustainability of our partners, through efficient collection, revenue generation

Sustainability

and fulfilment of our partners' climate change imperatives.

- Local authorities are declaring climate emergencies. We will help our partners find ways to reduce our footprint, and begin to build into our operations a presumption against generating waste and emissions.
- We mitigate financial exposure for partners through pooled resources and economies of scale and will continue to seek efficiencies for the partners.
- We maximise revenues through expert billing services, and diligent recovery of council tax and business rates debts and overpaid housing benefits.
- We will develop and implement a defined process for change projects and programmes and ensure clear identification of business need and evaluation of options, ahead of implementing any specific solutions.
- We use intelligence and data to identify properties where council tax or business rates should be paid and seek to maximise each partner's tax base.
- We evaluate all opportunities to do more with less and will pursue efficiencies as deemed appropriate.
- We expand the partnership for specific professional services (e.g. enforcement, fraud management, consultancy, leadership services) to local authorities beyond the partnership, and will grow these efficiency and resilience streams.
- Commercial activities will always operate under a risk-assured, risk-assessed approach, and must have a neutral or complementary effect on core services to partners.

Service Area	Indicator Name	Description/Rationale	Calculation	PI type	Target	Source of target	Other notes on target	Tolerance (if applicable)	Framework audience (upper reporting level)	Strategic priority
Billing and Benefits	HB new claims	Speed of processing	Total processing time in days / Qty of new HB claims	Target	DWP SoP 21 days	Department for Work and Pensions Average	Quarterly profile	3 days	1 - Joint Committee	Customer
Billing and Benefits	HB changes	Speed of processing	Total processing time in days / Qty of HB CICs	Target	DWP SoP 7 days	Department for Work and Pensions Average	Quarterly profile	3 days	1 - Joint Committee	Customer
Billing and Benefits	LCTRS new claims	Speed of processing	Total processing time in days from receipt of UC payment file /	Target	DWP SoP 21 days	Operational Improvement Board	Adopted from DWP HB SoP	3 days	1 - Joint Committee	Customer
Billing and Benefits	LCTRS changes	Speed of processing	Total processing time in days from receipt of UC payment file /	Target	DWP SoP 7 days	Operational Improvement Board	Adopted from DWP HB SoP	3 days	1 - Joint Committee	Customer
Billing and Benefits	Incomplete claims	To monitor number of incomplete claims received	No of requests for further information	Tracker	Monitoring				3 - ARP Management Team	Customer
Billing and Benefits	HB subsidy LA error	Value of overpayments caused by LA error as a % of total HBs	overpayment from LA error / CTAX HBs	Target	<0.35% of HB expenditure	Department for Work and Pensions	Budget requirement		2 - Operational Improvement Board	Sustainability
Billing and Benefits	CTax moves	Speed of processing	CTAX moves, dd's & death notifications processed / CTAX	Target	21 Days		Quarterly profile. EDMS data source	7 Days	2 - Operational Improvement Board	Customer
Billing and Benefits	CTax discounts/exemptions	Speed of processing	CTAX D+Es processed / CTAX D+Es received	Target	21 Days		Quarterly profile. EDMS data source	7 Days	2 - Operational Improvement Board	Customer
All	Call handling	Percentage of calls handled	% answered	Target	Average 90% for the year	ARP strategic management team			2 - Operational Improvement Board	Customer
All	Call handling - wrap up time	Monitoring resource	Average handling time	Tracker	Monitoring				3 - ARP Management Team	Customer
Billing and Benefits	Volume of assisted calls	Monitoring demand	Current levels of request for assistance	Tracker	Monitoring				3 - ARP Management Team/CS strategy team	Customer
All	Volume of incoming work	Monitoring demand	Current levels of incoming work by type & team, amount of work	Tracker	Monitoring				2 - Operational Improvement Board	Digital
Recovery/NNDR	Collection Fund	To monitor the amount of Ctax & NNDR collected within budget	Amount of Ctax/NNDR collected against budget	Target	100% collection	Budget		0.001%	1 - Joint Committee	Sustainability
Recovery/NNDR	In year collection	To monitor the amount of Ctax & NNDR collected against budget	Percentage of Ctax/NNDR collected against budget	Target	0.1% of last 2 years average	Average of last 2 years			2 - Operational Improvement Board	Sustainability

Non-Domestic Rates	NNDR correspondence (top 5)	Amount of work being completed in the targeted amount of and	Top 5 correspondence processed/no. received	Target	21 Days		7 Days		2 - Operational Improvement Board	Customer
Non-Domestic Rates	NNDR reports	reports being completed in the	Reports generated/report s completed	Target	21 Days		7 days		3 - ARP Management Team	Customer
Recovery/NN DR	Further Recovery Action	Number of referrals to the team to ensure the correct level	Number and value of cases highlighted	Tracker	Monitoring				3 - ARP Management Team	Sustainability
Recovery/NN DR	Arrears collection rate	Collection rate of arrears	Collection against all previous years	Target	Ultimate collection 99.5%	Tax base			2 - Operational Improvement Board	Sustainability
Recovery and Overpayment	HBOP 'cash' collection	Amount of money collected via means other than on going	Amount collected as a percentage of invoices raised	Target	60%	DWP	Subsidy or 40% received on overpayments		3 - ARP Management Team	Sustainability
Recovery/NN DR	Analysis of arrears (Stages)	Monitor and understand trends	Monitoring purposes	Tracker	Monitoring				3 - ARP Management Team	Sustainability
Recovery and Overpayment	Stagnant cases HBOP	Ensuring no case spends undue time at a non	Monitoring purposes	Tracker	Monitoring				3 - ARP Management Team	Sustainability
Recovery and Overpayment	Further Recovery collection	Total collection on FREC (% and Value) to ensure	Amount at FREC against collections from	Tracker	Monitoring				3 - ARP Management Team	Sustainability
Recovery and Overpayment	Recovery correspondence (top 5)	Amount of Recovery work being completed in the targeted	Top 5 correspondence processed/no. received	Target	21 Days		7 Days		3 - ARP Management Team	Customer
Recovery and Overpayment	Recovery reports	Amount of reports being completed in the	Reports generated/report s completed	Target	21 Days		7 days		3 - ARP Management Team	Customer
Recovery and Overpayment	Number of invoices being created HBOP	Number of invoices being created. To ensure that the	Current year invoices /prev 3 year invoices	Tracker					3 - ARP Management Team	Sustainability/colleagues
Enforcement Agency	Collection rate	To monitor the % of debt collected against	% of debt collected against collectable	Target	40% collection	Management Team			3 - ARP Management Team	Sustainability
Enforcement Agency	ARP Debt recovered	Amount of debt recovered for ARP since team	Amount of debt collected against collectable	Target					2 - Operational Improvement Board	Sustainability
Enforcement Agency	Fees recovered	Total of ARP fee income since the team began	Fees collected and % of fees raised collectable	Target	Budget target per year	ARP budget			2 - Operational Improvement Board	Sustainability
Enforcement Agency	Cases ready for call by client and debt type	How many cases ARPE have and what stage, 1st and 3rd	System report	100%	Cases complete or on arrangement within one year	Legislation			2 - operational Improvement Board	Sustainability/colleagues

Compliance	Single Person Discount	To monitor the value of Single Person Discount	value of SPD removal against cases	Tracker	Monitoring	Joint Committee		1 - Joint Committee	Sustainability
Compliance	Fraud Investigations	To monitor value for money and sanction action	investigated Value of savings and successful outcomes	Tracker	Monitoring	ARP strategic management team		1 - Joint Committee	Sustainability
Compliance	Visits – new properties & empties	To visit domestic and business addresses in a timely manner	value/number of properties brought into rating	Target	100% of new properties visited every 6 months	ARP strategic management team		3 - ARP Management Team	Sustainability
Compliance	Fraud referrals	To review fraud referrals in a timely manner	Time taken to review fraud referrals	Target	10 working days			3 - ARP Management Team	Sustainability
Compliance	Visits - proactive	To proactively seek out properties that may not be	value/number of properties brought into rating	Tracker	Monitoring	ARP strategic management team		3 - ARP Management Team	Sustainability
Compliance	Visits – special requests	To visit as requested by Council	Visits completed in timeframe	Target	90% within 2 months	ARP strategic management team		3 - ARP Management Team	Customer
Compliance	Providing information to external partners	To provide information to the	Response time	Target	5 working days	Multiple sources		3 - ARP Management Team	Relationships
Compliance	Social Housing fraud/Housing investigations	Recovery of social housing properties,	value or income generation, property	Tracker	Monitoring	Joint Committee		1 - Joint Committee	Relationships
Compliance	Single Person Discount – New Awards	To review all newly awarded SPD's on a rolling schedule	Number of SPD's reviewed and value of removals	Multiple PIs	100% of new SPDs reviewed	Operational Improvement Board		2 - Operational Improvement Board	Sustainability
System Admin	Helpdesk calls	Measure turnaround of helpdesk calls	Time to deal with helpdesk calls	Target	85% in 7 working days			3 - ARP Management Team	Colleagues
System Admin	Annual billing	Bills issued within statutory time limit	Qty on-time bills and notifications / Total qty bills and notifications	Target	100% on time	Legislation		3 - ARP Management Team	Sustainability
Customer Experience	Customer satisfaction			Multiple PIs		Customer Strategy Team	Survey	2 - Operational Improvement Board	Customer
Customer Experience	Total web sessions	Measure the traffic on angliarevenues.g	Qty of unique sessions	Tracker	Monitoring			4 - ARP Management Team/CS Strategy team	Digital
Customer Experience	Total on-line forms/email	Measure number of forms used (inc contact form)	Qty of online forms and email reduction	Target	10% inc per annum	Customer Strategy Team	inc. total numbers of corresponden	4 - ARP Management Team/CS Strategy team/OIB	Digital
Customer Experience	On-line forms abandoned	To monitor ease of use	Number of forms started but not completed	Tracker	Monitoring			4 - ARP Management Team/CS Strategy team	Digital

Customer Experience	Council Tax eBilling conversion rate	Ascertain proportion of self-service users as a proportion of overall DDs as a percentage of DDs	Qty of eBill opt-ins / Qty of all accounts	Target	10% inc per annum	Customer Strategy Team	Inc. total numbers of accounts	4 - ARP Management Team/CS Strategy team/OIB	Digital
Finance	Direct Debit	Can reveal issues with specific service areas, identifies where are key issues in a Service Area & include data can be used to calculate if new starter % matches	DDs qtys over total transaction qtys	Target	>70% of transactions	ARP management team		3 - ARP Management Team	Sustainability
Human Resources	Turnover	Can reveal issues with specific service areas, identifies where are key issues in a Service Area & include data can be used to calculate if new starter % matches	Qty of leavers in month / Qty of employees	Target	≤7% of establishment leaving	ARP average		2 - Operational Improvement Board	Colleagues
Human Resources	Sick Absence	Can reveal issues with specific service areas, identifies where are key issues in a Service Area & include data can be used to calculate if new starter % matches	Qty of sick days / Qty of working days	Target	≤2.5% workforce off sick	ARP average	Based on 2019/2020 statistics	2 - Operational Improvement Board	Colleagues
Human Resources	New Starters	Can reveal issues with specific service areas, identifies where are key issues in a Service Area & include data can be used to calculate if new starter % matches	Qty of starters in month / Qty of employees	Tracker	Equal to turnover	ARP average		3 - ARP Management Team	Colleagues
Human Resources	Training	Can reveal issues with specific service areas, identifies where are key issues in a Service Area & include data can be used to calculate if new starter % matches	Training requested/training provided	Target	85%	ARP average		3 - ARP Management Team	Colleagues
Human Resources	PDR's completed	Can reveal issues with specific service areas, identifies where are key issues in a Service Area & include data can be used to calculate if new starter % matches	PDR's completed /staffing establishment	Target	95%	ARP average		3 - ARP Management Team	Colleagues
Human Resources	Employee Survey	Can reveal issues with specific service areas, identifies where are key issues in a Service Area & include data can be used to calculate if new starter % matches	No of staff completing surveys	Target	50% completion rate	Survey findings		2 - Operational Improvement Board	Colleagues
All	Audit recommendations completed on time	Can reveal issues with specific service areas, identifies where are key issues in a Service Area & include data can be used to calculate if new starter % matches	No. completed/number raised	Tracker	Monitoring	Not a target		3 - ARP Management Team	Sustainability/Customer/Digital
Customer Experience	Online Services	Can reveal issues with specific service areas, identifies where are key issues in a Service Area & include data can be used to calculate if new starter % matches	% Digital usage compared to Caseload and volume of signed up for	Target	50% inc per annum	Customer Strategy Team	Inc. total numbers of accounts/contacts	4 - ARP Management Team/CS Strategy team/OIB	Digital
Support and Admin	Complaints	Can reveal issues with specific service areas, identifies where are key issues in a Service Area & include data can be used to calculate if new starter % matches	Justified out of complaints received - PAC	Target	100% within time tolerance	LA's own complaints procedure		4 - ARP Management Team/CS Strategy team	Customer
Support and Admin	Freedom of Information	Can reveal issues with specific service areas, identifies where are key issues in a Service Area & include data can be used to calculate if new starter % matches	Number answered within 20 days/number responded to	Target	100% within time tolerance	Legislation		4 - ARP Management Team/CS Strategy team	Customer
Support and Admin	Data Breaches	Can reveal issues with specific service areas, identifies where are key issues in a Service Area & include data can be used to calculate if new starter % matches	Justified out of complaints received - PAC	PI type not clear	100% within time tolerance	Legislation - GDPR		2 - Operational Improvement Board	Customer
Change Delivery	Programmes on track	Can reveal issues with specific service areas, identifies where are key issues in a Service Area & include data can be used to calculate if new starter % matches	showing 'on track' status of all projects in programme / Qty of projects in	Target	75% on track within each programme	ARP Management Team		Progress Report to ARP Management Team	Sustainability/Customer/Digital
Customer Experience	Customer journey projects performance	Can reveal issues with specific service areas, identifies where are key issues in a Service Area & include data can be used to calculate if new starter % matches	progress of the Customer Journey projects	Tracker	Monitoring	Customer Strategy Team		Report to Customer Strategic team/OIB	Customer

ANGLIA REVENUES PARTNERSHIP

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

To: ARP Joint Committee, 9th March 2021

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. Update at para 2.1.8

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** In April 2019 the DWP awarded a 12 month contract, extended in 2020, 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 review of the CAB Help to Claim service and at time of writing have still not stated the contract position for the 2021-2022 year, citing their Covid-19 response has delayed plans. It is assumed the CAB arrangement will continue into the 2021-2022 year.

2.1.9 Summary of the current 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 applied 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
- Only a very small number 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 2024
- DWP provided 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.

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 was 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 weeks 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 2019 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 was scheduled prior to 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

- Due to COVID-19 DWP stopped the Harrogate managed migration pilot. Consequently, a planned report has not gone to Parliament before Summer recess 2020, 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.
- Within Government's COVID-19 financial response, Universal Credit rates were temporarily increased by £20 per week for the 2020-2021 year. Whilst there has been recent debate in Parliament and the media, Government have stated they will provide a policy update for 2021-22 within their Budget on 3rd March 2021. It should be noted all the partner Local Council Tax Support schemes provide for customers to receive the full benefit of that uplift.

2.3 Discretionary Housing Payment – no 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 2020-2021 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 2020 Government 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 2021 – new matters arising

- 3.1** Government ended the four year Benefit up-rating freeze in 2020. From April 2021 all Benefits will increase by the September 2020 CPI inflation measure which is 0.5% with the State Pension rising by 2.5% due to the 'Triple Lock' (lower of CPI, average earnings or 2.5%).

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

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