

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, 7 December 2021 at 10.00 am in the  
Seminar and Training Room, Keystone Innovation Centre, Croxton Road, Thetford.  
IP24 1JD

**PRESENT**

Cllr David Ambrose-Smith (Chairman)	Cllr Sarah Broughton
Cllr E. Back	Cllr Philip Cowen

**In Attendance**

Paul Corney	- Head of ARP
Sam Anthony	- Head of HR & OD (Fenland)
Alison Chubbock	- Section 151 Officer & Assistant Director Finance
Lorraine King	- Head of Benefits & Council Tax Billing (ARP)
Rachael Mann	- Assistant Director (Resources & Performance) (West Suffolk)
Brian Mew	- Chief Finance Officer & S151 Officer (East Suffolk)
Adrian Mills	- Head of ARP
Matthew Waite-Wright	- Head of NNDR Recovery & Enforcement (ARP)
Ian Smith	- Finance Manager & S151 Officer (East Cams)
Teresa Smith	- Democratic Services Team Leader

**35/21 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

**36/21 APOLOGIES**

An apology had been received from Councillor French.

**37/21 URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

**38/21 DECLARATIONS**

None declared.

**39/21 JOINT COMMITTEE SERVICE PLAN AND RISK REGISTER REPORT**

Adrian Mills, the Assistant Head of ARP presented the report that recommended to Members to approve the Service Delivery Plan and Risk

**Action By**

**Action By**

Register as outlined at Appendix B of the report based on the progress in respect of the December 2020 Service Delivery Plan.

Councillor Cowen had noted that the focus on cyber issues remained a high risk but asked how ARP ensured that their systems remained protected and what steps had been put in place to maintain level support to teams. He also thought it should be highlighted as a separate risk item.

The Assistant Head of ARP said that West Suffolk District Council provided the IT support to the ARP systems and maintained compliance with PCN and assurance was given that all systems were cyber protected. In addition, training to refresh staff was underway.

The Head of ARP said that whilst it was already included within the Risk Register detailed emphasis would be made to highlight the importance of Cyber security.

Councillor Broughton asked at what stage were customers chased for payments. Members heard that when a customer had not paid an instalment the recovery programme would be followed. If no payment was forthcoming following a final notice, then it would be referred to Court and the ARP Enforcement team. If a customer was not found, then the debt could be written-off but ARP took all necessary steps to recover any debt.

**RESOLVED** that the:

- 1) progress in respect of the December 2020 Service Delivery Plan be noted.
- 2) revised Service Delivery Plan and Risk Register (at Appendix B of the report) subject to the Strategic Review as outlined within the report be approved by the ARP Joint Committee.

**40/21 PERFORMANCE REPORT (STANDING ITEM)**

Matthew Waite-Wright, Head of NNDR Recovery & Enforcement (ARP) presented the Performance report and particularly highlighted the service updates to Members.

The Chairman noted that the report made reference to a strong plan of priorities for the ARP Systems and Digital and asked for further detail. Members heard that an Electronic Document Management System (EDMS) was key and that the plan would review which processes would benefit ARP in the future and consider whether to continue with the current system, or alternatives.

Councillor Cowen was pleased to see that there was a positive collection rates despite the pandemic but asked how long it would continue, particularly with the new variant on the horizon. Matthew Waite-Wright said that the huge subsidies that had been provided to businesses had provided relief, however it was difficult to forecast due to the continuation of the COVID risk.

The Chairman was pleased to see the narrative that had been added to the report.

Members noted the contents of the report.

**41/21 ARP FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE 2021-22 (STANDING ITEM)**

Alison Chubbock, Assistant Director of Finance and S151 Officer for Breckland Council presented the report on the forecast full year financial position against budget for the ARP.

The forecast at this stage of the year showed a small underspend against budget of £62k for the whole of the ARP. The share of the forecast outturn for each partner based on the Joint Committee agreement and income compensation expected to be retained by each authority was shared.

Members were content to receive their final full year variance at the end of the financial year.

**RESOLVED** that:

- 1) The report and appendix be noted
- 2) The final full year variance at 31 March 2022 be shared between the partner authorities in the approved shares.

**42/21 WELFARE REFORM UPDATE (STANDING ITEM)**

Lorraine King, the Head of Benefits & Council Tax Billing presented the report that provided members with an update on the Welfare Reform.

It was highlighted that DWP had commenced a formal process to request bids for a digital and telephony service and intended to award the contract from April 2022 for one year.

DWP were launching a Universal Credit awareness campaign to encourage voluntary migration to encourage customers to transfer to Universal Credit, however Ministers were advocating caution when advising customers as voluntary customers would not receive the transitional protection which would be afforded to managed customers.

The recent budget announcement regarding Universal Credit that the taper for Universal Credit would be reduced from 63p to 55p per pound to help plug the gap left by the removal of the £20 uplift which affected 4.4million households nationally. The change was expected to benefit around 1.9million families.

The Chairman noted the report and recognised that DWP estimated that 30 – 50% of customers would be worse off when transferring to Universal Credit and asked how Officers would deal with that.

The Assistant Head of ARP said that DWP were promoting an awareness campaign and information was available on the website that also linked customers to benefits calculators.

Councillor Cowen asked what effect the change in strategy of the Citizens Advice Bureau had been and if customers continued to have access to those services. Members heard that ARP were not aware of any deterioration or improvement to the service, and that the deadline for the next contract had ended. Members would receive a further update at the next meeting.

Members noted the content of the report.

**Action By**

**43/21 ARP BUDGET SETTING 2022-23**

Alison Chubbock, the Assistant Director of Finance and S151 Officer for Breckland Council presented the budget setting report for 2022-23.

The annual budget setting had been based using the normal agreed principles and was prepared by the service accountants and each authority. The Budget was due to be approved in December to allow time for the ARP budgets to be incorporated within the 5 partner's individual budgets for their own budget setting.

The Chairman thanked the Breckland Finance team for the report and asked in order for better comparison that the current year was also included within the Budget setting summary.

Paul Corney, Head of ARP, also asked for thanks to be noted to the Breckland Finance team for their continued support with preparing the budgets for the ARP.

Councillor Cowen said looking ahead he could see that there would be an increased in costs and asked what plans would be set in place in order to cover that increase.

Members were informed that the increase would be due to staff salaries and general rises that would be expected, and there would be scope to control the supplies and services. However, in order to bring costs down then either additional income would need to be made or savings would be required.

Members were particularly interested in the income stream that had seen huge success particularly with enforcement and felt that there could be additional opportunities that needed to be identified.

**RESOLVED** that the partnership budget as shown at Appendix A of the report for 2022-23 be approved.

**44/21 FORTHCOMING ISSUES (STANDING ITEM)**

Nothing to report.

**45/21 NEXT MEETING**

The arrangements for the next meeting on Tuesday 1 March 2022 at 11am, Level 5 meeting room, Breckland House, St Nicholas Street Thetford were noted.

**46/21 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED** that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

**47/21 NORWICH FRAUD SERVICES - SECTION 113 AGREEMENT**

Adrian Mills, Assistant Head of ARP presented the report that asked Members to approve a Section 113 Agreement with Norwich City Council for

ARP to continue providing fraud services.

Members considered the item and asked for Officers to return with further detailed information in income generation for the Anglia Revenues Partnership.

**RESOLVED** that the item be deferred until next meeting.

**Action By**

The meeting closed at 11.10 am

CHAIRMAN

