

**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, 17 December 2019 at 11.00 am in the**  
**Level 5 Meeting Room, Breckland House, St Nicholas Street, Thetford IP24 1BT**

**PRESENT**

Mrs S. Broughton (Chairman)	Mr P.D. Claussen (Substitute Member)
Mr D Ambrose Smith	Mrs K. French (Substitute Member)
Mr M. Cook	

**In Attendance**

Jo Andrews	- Strategic Manager (Revenues)
Sam Anthony	- Head of HR & OD
Alison Chubbock	- Chief Accountant (Deputy Section 151 Officer) (BDC)
Tom Darling-Fernley	- Programme Manager (ARP).
Nick Khan	- Strategic Director (East Suffolk)
Rachael Mann	- Assistant Director (Resources & Performance)
Siobhan Martin	- Head of Internal Audit
Adrian Mills	- Strategic Manager (Billing & Benefits) ARP
Stuart Philpot	- Strategic Manager (Support Services) ARP
Ian Smith	- Finance Manager & S151 Officer (East Cambs)
Julie Britton	- Democratic Services Officer

**35/19 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 1)**

(a) 11 June 2019

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2019 were agreed as a correct record.

(b) 17 September 2019 - Notes

The Notes of the meeting held on 17 September 2019 were noted.

**36/19 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 2)**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Cowen and J French. Substitutes in attendance were Councillors Claussen and K French.

Apologies were also received from Paul Corney and Peter Catchpole.

**37/19 URGENT BUSINESS (AGENDA ITEM 3)**

None.

**38/19 DECLARATIONS (AGENDA ITEM 4)**

None declared.

**Action By**

**41/19 PERFORMANCE REPORT AND SERVICE UPDATES (AGENDA ITEM 7)**

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

Members were informed that all Partner Councils combined for 2019/20 for Business Rates and Council Tax collection were on target and the target for fraud and compliance for the year had been exceeded.

Breckland's Council Tax collection was behind target by £230,173 due to the high level of refunds for this year, £609k compared to £475k at this point last year – an increase of £134k which had reduced collection.. Breckland also had an increase in the amount of pre-payments for the current financial year and the first summons for non-payment had been delayed one month by the Court which would have an effect. The situation was being closely monitored.

Members were informed that whilst the Housing Benefit performance indicator had been exceeded and overachieved, this had been due to the downtime associated with the merger of East Suffolk and West Suffolk systems.

Referring to East Suffolk Council Business Rates, the collection rates were behind target for the current financial year by £347k. There had been £3.9m of backdated refunds as a result of reductions in rateable value.

As far as enforcement was concerned, the Enforcement Team continued to perform well and had collected almost £19m. From July 2019, the Team had been taking cases from Norwich City Council with some good results.

The Anglia Revenues website design had been enhanced to be more transactional and as straight forward as possible for customers and was now showing a 10% increase in usage for Council Tax, Business Rates, Housing Benefit and Local Council Tax Reduction Schemes.

The Chairman mentioned the Better Customer Journeys Programme and asked if the website was going to be further improved. Members were informed that ARP was currently working with Capita to make such improvements. All partner Councils would need to be involved to make sure that the product was fit for purpose and make it an easier journey for the customer.

Adrian Mills, the Strategic Manager for Billing & Benefits reported that Capita had now released version 2 of the address form which was in test to check enhancements that had been identified and implemented.

The Performance Report and Service updates were otherwise noted.

**42/19 ARP FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE (AGENDA ITEM 8)**

Alison Chubbock, the Chief Accountant for Breckland Council presented the report.

The report highlighted the full year financial information against the budget for ARP. The latest forecast at this stage of the year showed a small over spend of £34k (0.4%) for the whole of ARP.

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Members were provided with a detailed overview of the work involved to develop coherent annual service delivery plans, change delivery plans and a target operating model that had led to a review of the Partnership's strategic priorities that now included benefits, customer needs and development of staff.

A strategy had been developed along with a Service Plan, details of the whole process that was followed could be found at Appendix C of the report.

The strategic themes at section 3.2.3 of the report were highlighted.

The Chairman was pleased to note that 'customers' were one of the top priorities.

Councillor Ambrose-Smith was concerned that none of the themes/priorities included the Department of Work & Pensions. Members were informed that DWP would come within 'relationships'.

Referring to Appendix D, Councillor Claussen had noticed that under 'colleagues' agile working was mentioned that would, in his opinion, be a complete culture shift and asked where ARP was at in that journey. The Strategic Manager (Support Services) explained that this would mean being able to work across all 4 sites and would be helpful for homeworking too. It was noted that this agile approach included management.

Councillor Claussen asked if this agile working would free up space at Breckland House. Members were informed that the building would not be overloaded – there was desk space and hot desking would be available.

Councillor Cook asked where ARP was with its 'digital by default' service. The Programme Manager advised that 'digital by default' had the potential to free up a large amount of full-time posts as it would promote more self-service.

In response to a question about timelines, Members were informed that Universal Credit automation was on track to be delivered by April/May 2020. The software was being tested and more elements could be added, subject to system capability.

**RESOLVED** that the mission, strategic themes and vision as set in the report and in Appendix D be approved.

**45/19 THE ANGLIA REVENUES PARTNERSHIP (ARP) SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN (AGENDA ITEM 11)**

In the absence of Paul Corney, the Head of ARP, Jo Andrews, the Strategic Manager for Revenues presented the report.

In accordance with the ARP Agreement a revised Service Delivery plan should be agreed by the Joint Committee by the end of December each year.

The last Service Delivery Plan had been agreed in December 2018 and the report provided Members with the progress/achievements that had been made since then (see section 2.1 of the report). One improvement had been on call handling and performance had increased significantly in comparison to

Action By

The Chief Accountant explained that for some Councils, the increases were higher than others but this was due to how the Partnership contributions had been split. Another reason for East Cambs percentage increase had been due to the drop in its enforcement cases.

Councillor Claussen reminded Members that East Cambs budget included a zero increase to its Council Tax.

The recommendation was proposed and seconded, and following a vote, 4 in favour and 1 against, it was:

**RESOLVED** that the Partnership budget for 2020-21 at Appendix A of the report be approved.

**47/19 JOINT COMMITTEE ARP BROCHURE (AGENDA ITEM 13)**

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

It was noted that all suggestions provided at the last meeting had been incorporated into the brochure and Members were thanked for providing their photographs.

Section 5 of the report in respect of costs was highlighted and it was further noted that only 250 copies of the brochure would be printed.

The ARP brochure would be reviewed on a regular basis; there would be an on-line version in a PDF format as well as a link.

Councillor Cook was pleased with the brochure and asked for the link to be sent round to Members again.

**RESOLVED** that:

1. the new ARP Brochure be adopted for use by the Anglia Revenues Partnership to provide information to Members, new Joint Committee Members and new staff working as part of the ARP; and
2. the December version of the ARP Brochure be approved.

**48/19 FORTHCOMING ISSUES (STANDING ITEM) (AGENDA ITEM 14)**

Nothing to report.

**49/19 NEXT MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 15)**

The arrangements for the next meeting on 24 March 2020 at 11am in Level 5 meeting room, Thetford were noted.

It was further noted that the pre-briefing for Members of the Joint Committee would commence at 10am.

The meeting closed at 12.10 pm

CHAIRMAN