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A G E N D A

ANGLIA REVENUES & BENEFITS PARTNERSHIP JOINT COMMITTEE

DATE & TIME: Wednesday, 10th September, 2008 at 4.00 pm

VENUE: Level 8, Breckland House, St Nicholas Street, Thetford

For the attention of:

Mr P.D. Claussen, Breckland Council
Mr W.H.C. Smith, Breckland Council
Mr. J. Humphreys, East Cambridgeshire District Council
Mr S. Edwards, Forest Heath District Council
Mr E. Stewart, Forest Heath District Council
Mr G. Wilson, East Cambridgeshire District Council

PART A **ITEMS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

1. MINUTES

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2008.

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

1 - 7

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

Date: Monday, 1 September 2008

Contact: Elaine Wilkes. Senior Committee Officer (01362) 656354
Email: elaine.wilkes@breckland.gov.uk

	<u>Page(s)</u> <u>herewith</u>
4. <u>DECLARATION OF INTEREST</u> Members are asked at this stage to declare any interests they may have in any of the following items on the agenda. The Members' Code of Conduct requires that declarations include the nature of the interest and whether it is a personal and/or prejudicial interest.	
5. <u>PERFORMANCE REPORT AS AT 31JULY 2008</u> Report of the Operational Board.	8 - 14
6. <u>LOCAL HOUSING ALLOWANCE</u> a) <u>Project Update</u> To receive a verbal report on progress of this project. b) <u>Vulnerability and Safeguarding Policy</u> Report of the Operational Board.	15 - 19
7. <u>EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT ALLOWANCE (ESA)</u> Report of the Operational Board. (Note: The financial appendix to this report (Proforma B) is to follow.	20 - 22
8. <u>SINGLE HOUSING BENEFIT SCAN (HBIASD) - UPDATE</u> Report of the Operational Board.	23 - 25
9. <u>ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING</u> To note any items for inclusion on the agenda for the next meeting.	
10. <u>NEXT MEETING</u> To note the date of the next meeting on Thursday, 11 December 2008 at 4.00 p.m. at Level 8, Breckland House, Thetford.	
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 item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 4 of Schedule 12A to the Act."	
<u>PART B -</u> <u>ITEMS FROM WHICH THE PRESS AND PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED</u>	
12. <u>SALARY REVIEW</u> Report of the Operational Board.	To Follow

BRECKLAND COUNCIL
FOREST HEATH DISTRICT COUNCIL
EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

ANGLIA REVENUES AND BENEFITS PARTNERSHIP

**Held on Wednesday, 21 May 2008 at 4.00 pm in the
Level 8, Breckland House, St Nicholas Street, Thetford**

PRESENT

Mr P.D. Claussen	Mr E. Stewart
Mr S. Edwards	Mr G. Wilson
Mr W.H.C. Smith	

In Attendance

Rachel Beswick	- Senior Accountant (Breckland)
Alex Colyer	- Executive Director of Finance (East Cambs)
Kate Dann	- Principal Benefits Officer (ARP)
Sharon Jones	- Operations Manager (ARP)
Steve Knights	- Strategic Manager (ARP)
Lynda Pope	- Head of Finance (Forest Heath)
Rod Urquhart	- Performance Manager (ARP)
Elaine Wilkes	- Senior Committee Officer (Breckland)

14/08 CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED that

- (1) Mr. G. Wilson be elected Chairman for the ensuing year; and
- (2) Mr. E. Stewart be appointed Vice-Chairman for the ensuing year.

15/08 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 February 2008 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The following updates to the minutes were noted:

- (a) Statement of Accounts 2006-07 ARP Joint Committee: Unaudited Draft (Minute 5/08) – The Statement of Accounts was presently with the Auditor.
- (b) Management Service Level Agreement (Minute 6/08) – The resolution of certain pension details was still in progress but it was anticipated this would be concluded shortly.

16/08 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor John Humphreys, new Joint Committee Member for East Cambridgeshire District Council, who had been appointed to replace Councillor Peter Cresswell.

Action By

17/08 PERFORMANCE REPORTS (AGENDA ITEM 6)

Action By

(a) Operational Performance as at 31 March 2008 & 30 April 2008

The Performance Manager presented the reports covering the months of March and April 2008.

Successes during the period included attendance at two job fairs to provide benefits advice to workers made redundant by the closure of two companies and the nomination of the Partnership as an example of best practice by the Pension Service for its bereavement officer service. The Partnership had also received a second Municipal Journal commendation for its benefits services and was also bidding for IRRV Benefits Team of the Year award.

Three complaints had been received during March in respect of Council Tax. It was thought the reason for the rise in this number was as a result of the tougher stance being taken in enforcement of non-payers.

Progress of the discussions taking place with other authorities in regard to Partnership growth was noted. It was also noted that East Cambridgeshire District Council was positively looking to move forward with the proposal to join ARP Trading.

So far as the performance statistics for the period were concerned, it was noted that the figures for collection of council tax had been affected by the timing of the Easter holiday. Actual figures were requested to be circulated to members. Collection rates generally among local authorities also appeared to be being affected by the current economic climate, although the evidence for this was anecdotal only at this stage. This could mean that the overall year on year high performance levels might not be sustainable in the present climate. The Partnership would be focusing on council tax collection in the coming year to raise performance in this area.

Performance in the national ratings was expected to be maintained at the upper or top quartile level.

For 2008-09, the national BVPI's had changed and there were new Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE), including one on fraud. A report would be made to a future meeting on any implications of these on future performance requirements.

A recent drive towards promoting small business rate relief had significantly improved the uptake of this relief by small businesses. Changes in the regulations now meant that non-domestic rates were payable on empty properties (after three or six months dependent on the type of property), although there were exemptions for certain types of property (e.g. a listed building) or if the rateable value was below the threshold. Members were concerned that there had been little national publicity about these changes. The Performance Manager explained that a presentation had been produced to explain the changes and impact and this would be made available to members. More information would be made available when ready. Officers were also happy to attend meetings if required.

**Rod
Urquhart**

**Rod
Urquhart**

Action By

The report was noted.

(b) **Financial Performance as at 31 March 2008**

The Senior Accountant presented the report, the details of which were noted.

With regard to the Underspend figures, it was agreed more work was required to ensure that the ARP reserve in 2008-09 included provision for existing approved projects to be carried forward and the Joint Committee also needed to agree whether the overall Underspend and additional income should be retained by the ARP for forward projects or be returned to the Partner Authorities.

RESOLVED that the officers be asked to recommend the amount of Underspend and additional income to be carried forward to the ARP Reserve for 2008-09 or to be shared by the relevant Authorities and, subject to prior consultation with the members of the Joint Committee, to submit the necessary report to the three partner authorities for their approval.

Rachel
Beswick,
Alex Colyer,
Lynda Pope

18/08 FUNDING FOR INTRODUCTION OF EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT ALLOWANCE (ESA) (AGENDA ITEM 7)

The Operations Manager presented the report which sought approval to the allocation of the funds awarded to each partner authority for the implementation of benefit changes consequent upon the introduction of the Employment Support Allowance (ESA). The respective amounts concerned were: Forest Heath District Council £15,000, Breckland Council £35,149 and East Cambridgeshire District Council £17,024. (DWP circular S2/2008 refers)

The new ESA was due to come into effect on 1st October 2008 and would replace Incapacity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance and Income Support on the grounds of incapacity or disability for new customers. There would be two types of ESA – income-related or contributory. Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit regulations were to be amended to accommodate ESA and the new components, ensuring that the number of ‘losers’ compared to the existing system was kept to a minimum.

The funding awarded was provided by the DWP to implement these legislative changes and would enable the project to cover a period of consolidation to assist affected customers, stakeholders and officers during the transition and to consider ongoing procedural changes as the volume of cases increased.

It was pointed out that if the recommendation was approved, this would involve Breckland invoicing the two other partner authorities to draw the Grant income into the Partnership accounts held by Breckland.

RECOMMEND to the relevant Committees of Forest Heath District Council, Breckland Council and East Cambridgeshire District Council that

- (1) approval is given to the release of the respective funds provided by DWP to allow the project to commence as

follows:

- Forest Heath District Council - £15,000
 - Breckland Council - £35,149
 - East Cambridgeshire District Council - £17,024
- (2) the funding received by East Cambridgeshire and Forest Heath District Councils is paid into the Partnership budgets held by Breckland; and
- (3) The Partnership budgets held by Breckland are increased by £67,173 to allow for the necessary changes to be made for the introduction of ESA.

A copy of the financial report in respect of this item is appended to these minutes.

19/08 LOCAL HOUSING ALLOWANCE & SAFEGUARD POLICY (AGENDA ITEM 8)

(a) Local Housing Allowance - Update

The Operations Manager presented the report which updated the Joint Committee on progress with the introduction of the Local Housing Allowance, which came into force on 7 April 2008. The LHA introduced a new way of working out Housing Benefit for private tenants.

The number of claims to date appeared low compared to the advice given by the Rent Service on levels to be expected. A further meeting with the landlords' group would therefore be held to ensure there were no unforeseen problems and to assess the impact of the new system. Exact figures on the position to date would be circulated to members for information.

The position was noted.

(b) Safeguard Policy

This item was deferred to the next meeting due to the inadvertent omission of the Policy appendix from the report.

20/08 ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 9)

The following items were noted for the next meeting:

- Performance Report
- Financial Performance Report
- Local Housing Allowance Safeguard Policy

Action By

Kate Dann

21/08 FUTURE MEETINGS TIMETABLE

The following future meeting dates were agreed:

- Wednesday, 10 September 2008
- Thursday, 11 December 2008

The provisional date of 5 March 2009 remained to be confirmed nearer the time.

Action By

The meeting closed at 5.30 pm

CHAIRMAN

BRECKLAND COUNCILPROFORMA FOR EXECUTIVE MEMBER APPROVAL OF THE RELEASE OF
RESOURCES
(CAPITAL AND REVENUE BUDGETS)

FROM: Alison Batley (Management Accountant)

THIS PROFORMA PROVIDES THE FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS
IN RESPECT OF THE ATTACHEDREPORT: **Funding for Introduction of Employment Support Allowance
(ESA).**REPORT DATE: **21st May 2008**

	£ Year 1 2008/09	£ Year 2 2009/10	£ Year 3 2010/11	£ Year 4 2011/12	£ Year 5 2012/13
404 0000 *** 4***	£67,173				
Breckland	(£35,149)				
East Cambs	(£17,024)				
Forest Heath	(£15,000)				
Total Capital + Revenue	£0				

Funding required:		Considered by:	Date:
Total capital cost	£	ARP Joint Committee	21 May 08
Revenue cost	£		

Financial Services Comments

Each partner authority will be in receipt of one off funds from DWP for the implementation of benefit changes caused by the introduction of ESA.

As detailed in paragraph 3.2 of the report, it is not fully known at this stage what these changes will require. However it is likely that the funds will be spent on project management, changes to IT & processes, new leaflets & claim forms and training.

If approval is given to this report, it is recommended that:

- Funding received by East Cambs & Forest Heath is paid into the partnership budgets held by Breckland
- The partnership budgets held by Breckland are increased by £67,173 to allow for the necessary changes to be made for the introduction of ESA

Risk

In addition to the risks detailed in the report, there is a financial risk that there may be additional ongoing costs (ie: software maintenance for new systems) which are not currently budgeted for. If any additional costs are identified, they will need to be absorbed within the partnership budgets in future years.

This PB is valid for 3 months from PB date	If this PB is not longer required please advise Finance	If there are changes to the original report it may invalidate this document, it must be reviewed by Finance.
29/05/2008	Page 1 of 2	D:\moderngov\Data\AgendaItemDocs\7\3\3\AI00004337\EmploymentSupport AllowanceAppendixproformab0.doc

Procurement

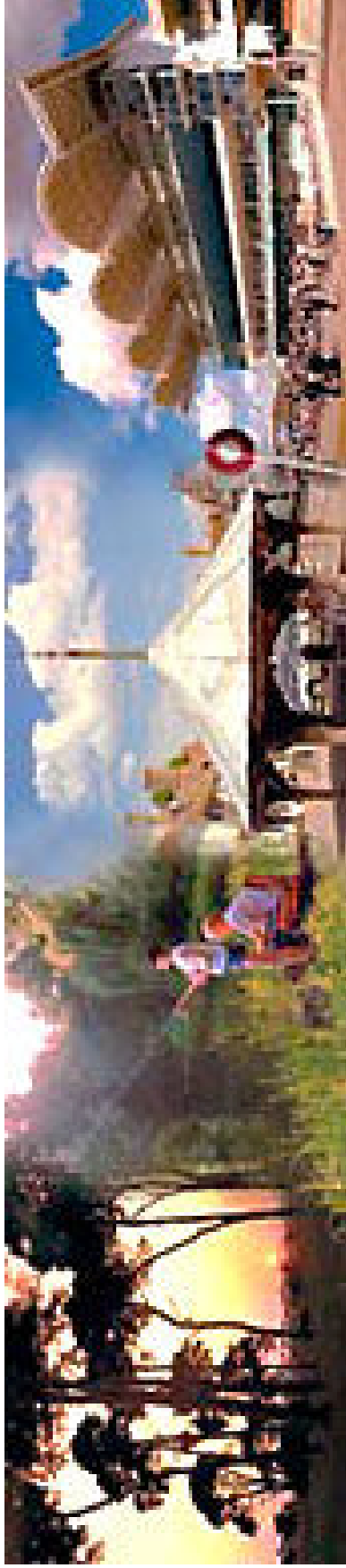
Any procurement (ie: new systems, software, staff, etc) will need to comply with Breckland's contract standing orders & procurement rules.

Gershon Efficiencies

This project is not forecast to identify any Gershon efficiencies, however if any efficiency is identified then this should be reported to Finance when quantified.

This PB is valid for 3 months from PB date	If this PB is not longer required please advise Finance	If there are changes to the original report it may invalidate this document, it must be reviewed by Finance.
29/05/2008	Page 2 of 2	D:\moderngov\Data\AgendaItemDocs\7\3\3\AI00004337\EmploymentSupport AllowanceAppendixproformab0.doc

ARP
Performance Monthly



Aim for Excellence Performance at 31st July 2008

Performance Monthly - contents

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Introduction

The Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership (ARP) is a unique partnership between Breckland Council, Forest Heath District Council & East Cambridgeshire District Council. The partnership, formed on the 1st of August 2003, is the first to provide a shared Revenues and Benefits service to the residents of three local authorities.

The authorities have seen significant improvements in service provision since 2003 with several key areas of performance operating within the top quartile of national performance indicators. The Benefits service has been highly praised in 2004 by the Benefits Fraud Inspectorate for the quality of its assessment and strategic management processes.

We aim to provide a consistently high performance with high customer focus for every current and future partner with whom we work. Rigorous processes produce the highest standards of performance and regular monitoring of results allows adjustments to be quickly instigated to ensure continuous improvement is achieved.

The Partnership aims to grow during 2007 to provide a similar high standard of service across a broader partnership base, but also to improve the income of the partnership and thus reduce the overall cost of service provision. To achieve this, a wide range of training and consultancy opportunities will be offered to the Local Government market.

Performance Measurement

This newsletter and the statistics report are produced monthly to provide a simple communication of the performance of the partnership services. This is easily available within all partnership authorities and is circulated electronically to all staff of the ARP. It is also posted monthly to the ARP website for all customers, stakeholders and interested parties to view and comment upon.

The website can be accessed at www.angliarevenues.gov.uk and any comments can be made by e-mail to the partnership manager, Steve Knights at steve.knights@angliarevenues.gov.uk.

The primary monthly measures of performance shown in the statistics report are the national Best Value Performance Indicators. An annual target is set within the partnership annual work programme that is to be achieved by the end of March each year. A monthly profiled target is estimated to give a meaningful monthly measure of progress towards these targets.

Colour coding – if performance is on target against the target this is highlighted in Green

Performance slightly below target is highlighted in amber and

Performance significantly underachieving is highlighted in red.

Red performance will also have an action plan attached as an appendix to this report to demonstrate how it is intended to bring performance back to a green standard.

Successes and compliments this month

During July the Partnership has continued to work with the pension service, targeting pensioners receiving Housing / Council Tax Benefit & not Pension Credit & vice-versa. In addition to this more sheltered accommodation visits are being planned to ensure maximum benefit entitlement. Regular meetings are also continuing with the Citizens Advice Bureau & warm front letters have been sent to qualifying households within Forest Heath & East Cambs.

Complaints this month

The figures for complaints are currently unavailable but will be reported in a later performance report.

Project progress

Partnership growth

The Local Housing Allowance (LHA) project went live on 1st April 2008. This is a major project, which radically affects the Housing Benefit Legislation. It should be noted this achievement was only possible due to the amount of commitment shown by the team. We are now in the consolidation phase of this project and work will still be undertaken to review the changes / impact to our customers.

Staff changes and recruitment

There were no staff changes in July 2008.

Comments

If you have any comments about the performance data provided in this newsletter please contact:

Rod Urquhart - Performance Manager

☎ 01842 756437 📠 rod.urquhart@angliarevenues.gov.uk

Steve Knights - Partnership Strategic Manager

☎ 01842 756401 📠 steve.knights@angliarevenues.gov.uk

✉ Anglia Revenues & Benefits Services

St Nicholas Street

Thetford

Norfolk

IP28 7EY

ARP Annual Targets by Authority 2008/09

Breckland Council											
NI	Description	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	Annual	Profile YTD	Actual YTD	Status	Notes		
180	Changes in Housing Benefit / Council Tax Benefit entitlements within the year	New	New	New	10	10	8.9	Green	Target to be set by DWP		
181	Time taken to process Housing / Council Tax Benefit new claims & change events	New	New	New	10	10	8.9	Green			
LPI	Description	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	Annual	Profile YTD	Actual YTD	Status	Notes		
BEN1	Accuracy of processing	100.0%	99.8%	99.0%	99.0%	99.00%	100.0%	Green			
CTAX1	Collection of Council Tax	98.50%	98.60%	98.50%	98.80%	39.47%	39.04%	Amber			
CTAX2	% of Payers paying by Direct Debit	63.10%	63.50%	66.20%	70.00%	68.40%		Green			
NDR1	Collection of Business Rates	99.20%	99.30%	99.50%	99.30%	38.50%	39.13%	Green			
NDR2	% of Eligible Businesses claiming Small Business Rate Relief	New	45.00%	68.00%	85.00%	70.00%	88.10%	Green	Unable to provide due to system error		
OPAY1	Total Recovered Overpayments as a % of Overpayments identified during the year	66.60%	74.20%	71.00%	60.00%	60.00%	83.31%	Green			

Forest Heath											
NI	Description	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	Annual	Profile YTD	Actual YTD	Status	Notes		
180	Changes in Housing Benefit / Council Tax Benefit entitlements within the year	New	New	New	10	10	8.77	Green	Target to be set by DWP		
181	Time taken to process Housing / Council Tax Benefit new claims & change events	New	New	New	10	10	8.77	Green			
LPI	Description	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	Annual	Profile YTD	Actual YTD	Status	Notes		
BEN1	Accuracy of processing	100.0%	99.8%	99.0%	99.0%	99.00%	100.0%	Green			
CTAX1	Collection of Council Tax	97.90%	98.30%	98.20%	98.80%	40.52%	39.83%	Amber			
CTAX2	% of Payers paying by Direct Debit	60.20%	64.80%	66.90%	70.00%	70.11%		Green			
NDR1	Collection of Business Rates	99.30%	99.00%	99.30%	99.30%	38.60%	39.14%	Green			
NDR2	% of Eligible Businesses claiming Small Business Rate Relief	New	45.00%	67.80%	85.00%	70.00%	83.10%	Green	Unable to provide due to system error		
OPAY1	Total Recovered Overpayments as a % of Overpayments identified during the year	68.80%	67.00%	64.60%	60.00%	60.00%	70.22%	Green			

East Cambs											
NI	Description	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	Annual	Profile YTD	Actual YTD	Status	Notes		
180	Changes in Housing Benefit / Council Tax Benefit entitlements within the year	New	New	New	10	10	6.64	Green	Target to be set by DWP		
181	Time taken to process Housing / Council Tax Benefit new claims & change events	New	New	New	10	10	6.64	Green			
LPI	Description	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	Annual	Profile YTD	Actual YTD	Status	Notes		
BEN1	Accuracy of processing	98.50%	97.90%	100.0%	99.00%	99.00%	100.0%	Green			
CTAX1	Collection of Council Tax	98.50%	97.90%	98.40%	98.50%	40.13%	40.76%	Green			
CTAX2	% of Payers paying by Direct Debit			66.20%	70.00%	70.78%		Green			
NDR1	Collection of Business Rates	99.20%	99.00%	99.40%	99.30%	38.60%	41.50%	Green			
NDR2	% of Eligible Businesses claiming Small Business Rate Relief	New	68.20%	68.20%	85.00%	70.00%	77.20%	Green	Unable to provide due to system error		
OPAY1	Total Recovered Overpayments as a % of Overpayments identified during the year	76.40%	68.70%	74.00%	60.00%	60.00%	59.20%	Amber			

ANGLIA REVENUES PARTNERSHIP

**Report of Steve Knights the Strategic Manager - to the
JOINT COMMITTEE – 10th September 2008**

Author Rick Steels

LOCAL HOUSING ALLOWANCE VULNERABILITY & SAFEGUARDING POLICY

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report seeks endorsement by members of the Joint Committee for the adoption of a Local Housing Allowance (LHA) Vulnerability and Safeguarding policy.

2. Recommendations

- It is recommended that the Committee:
2.1 Adopt the attached LHA vulnerability and safeguarding policy with immediate effect

Note: In preparing this report, due regard has been had to equality of opportunity, human rights, prevention of crime and disorder, environmental and risk management considerations as appropriate. Relevant officers have been consulted in relation to any legal, financial or human resources implications and comments received are reflected in the report.

3. Information, Issues and Options

3.1 Background

3.1.1 The Local Housing Allowance which came into effect from 7th April 2008 introduced two significant changes to the way that Housing Benefit for tenants of private landlords is calculated.

3.1.2 Firstly the figure used as the basis for a maximum rent changed and is now determined by an amount that is provided monthly by the Rent Service, secondly the payment of Housing Benefit must be paid to the claimant rather than the landlord unless the claimant is considered to need protection due to their vulnerability.

3.2 Vulnerability & Safeguarding Policy

3.2.1 Officers have worked closely with other local authorities within Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire and a range of advice agencies, to produce a Vulnerability & Safeguarding policy (See Appendix A) which seeks to protect those customers who because of their personal circumstances are deemed at risk, if their Housing Benefit is paid directly to them.

3.2.2 Staff within the Benefits Service have been provided with a set of guidelines that will ensure the policy is administered fairly and appropriately.

3.3 Reasons for Recommendation(s)

3.3.1 The adoption of the Vulnerability & Safeguarding policy is essential if the partnership is to reduce the risk to vulnerable customers of losing their homes.

4. Risk and Financial Implications

4.1 Risk

4.1.1 There is no risk identified with this report

4.2 Financial

4.2.1 None

5. Legal Implications

5.1 None

6. Other Implications [*Insert statement or confirm 'none' as appropriate at each sub-paragraph*]

a) None

b) None

c) None

d) None

e) None

f) None

7. Alignment to Council Priorities

7.1

8. Ward/Community Affected

8.1 All

Background Papers

Not applicable

Lead Contact Officer:

Name/Post: Rick Steels

Telephone: 01842 756511

Email: rick.steels@angliarevenues.gov.uk

Key Decision Status (Executive Decisions only):

For information

Appendices attached to this report:

Appendix A – LHA Vulnerability & Safeguarding policy



Anglia Revenues Partnership Housing Benefits

Local Housing Allowance

Vulnerability & Safeguarding Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Under Local Housing Allowance (LHA) a tenant cannot simply request that their payments are made to their landlord. There are certain circumstances, however, in which Councils must pay the landlord direct and others where there is discretion to do so to protect those requiring safeguard considerations due to vulnerability. This policy sets out the guidelines under which consideration should be given to individual cases and decisions made. This document has been developed in consultation with stakeholders throughout the ARP area.

2. Aims and Objectives

- 2.1 To provide a safeguard for the most vulnerable tenants and reassure them that their Housing Benefit will be paid
- 2.2 To help prevent rent arrears and to avoid tenants being put at risk of eviction
- 2.3 To help sustain tenancies for those requiring safeguard considerations
- 2.4 To reassure landlords that their Housing Benefit will be paid if they have at risk tenants or are approached by tenants requiring safeguard considerations
- 2.5 To help put tenants in touch with other agencies where necessary and give people the opportunity and support to manage their own affairs
- 2.6 To ensure council officers make reasonable, fair and consistent decisions
- 2.7 To promote a transparent and simple process that is widely understood

- 2.8 To treat each case individually and to avoid making assumptions about people's situations

The policy is not designed to:

- 2.9 Replace support that is being received by tenants already
- 2.10 Be a blanket policy for agencies providing support to private tenants
- 2.11 Be used by landlords to circumvent the aims of LHA

3. Alerting the partnership of potential tenants requiring safeguard considerations

- 3.1 The tenant or any person acting on their behalf makes the partnership aware that they would prefer their LHA to be paid to the landlord. The request needs to be supported with written evidence from a third party, but initially can be by:

- A letter / email
- A phone call
- The application form

4. Gathering information and evidence

- 4.1 Officers will consider the information that has been provided and whether there is enough evidence to make an appropriate decision. Examples of those who can provide this information are:

- Adult Social Care Teams
- Homelessness Prevention Caseworkers
- Support or advisory services like the Citizens Advice Bureau, Supporting People Providers etc.
- A tenant's family or friends
- General Practitioners

- 4.2 Evidence from a landlord should not be accepted in most cases.

5. Making a decision

- 5.1 The partnership will make one of two decisions
- a) The tenant falls within the safeguarded guidelines and payment of LHA will be made to the landlord
- b) The tenant is does not fall within the safeguarded guidelines and payment of LHA will be made to the tenant

6. Notifying affected parties

The tenant and/or their representative will be written to and advised of the following:

- The decision
- If and when the decision will be reviewed
- Appeal rights
- Advice agencies, voluntary or statutory organisations that may help them
- Contact details for the independent advice agencies if they don't have a bank account (e.g. in cases where they will be receiving excess LHA)

The landlord will also be written to and advised:

- If their tenant has been found to fall within the safeguarded guidelines and the Council will pay them LHA up to the contractual rent
- If and when the decision will be reviewed
- Request bank details if not previously received
- If their tenant has been found not to fall within the safeguarded guidelines, the landlord's appeal rights against this decision

7. Examples of tenants who fall within the safeguarded guidelines

There are a number of reasons why a tenant may be having problems managing their money that might lead us to decide to pay the landlord direct. These include cases where a tenant:

- Has a medical condition (affecting their mental health) and they have no carer acting on their behalf
- Has a learning disability or a physical disability
- Has previously been homeless due to non payment of rent
- Is going through some life-changes that mean he/ she needs some extra support for a period
- Is dealing with an addiction to e.g. alcohol, gambling or drugs
- Has severe debt problems e.g. county court judgement's, bankruptcy, or a bad credit rating preventing them opening a bank account

NB This list is not exhaustive, nor does meeting one or more of the criteria guarantee that a person is meeting the safeguarded guidelines e.g. a person recovering from an addiction problem may be attempting to manage their financial affairs as part of their rehabilitation.

Anglia Revenues Partnership

**Report of Operational Board to the
JOINT COMMITTEE – 10TH SEPTEMBER 2008**

Author Rod Urquhart

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT ALLOWANCE (ESA) UPDATE REPORT

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide members with an update on ESA & produce a forecast expenditure model.

2. Recommendations

- It is recommended that the Committee:
- 2.1 Note the contents of the report
- 2.2

Note: In preparing this report, due regard has been had to equality of opportunity, human rights, prevention of crime and disorder, environmental and risk management considerations as appropriate. Relevant officers have been consulted in relation to any legal, financial or human resources implications and comments received are reflected in the report.

3. Information, Issues and Options

3.1 Background

- 3.1.1 From October 2008, ESA will replace Incapacity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance and Income Support on the grounds of incapacity or disability for new customers. There will be two types of ESA, income-related or contributory
- 3.1.2 A previous report was taken to the Joint Committee seeking approval that the money received by the DWP was pooled together. Approval was granted

3.2 Issues

- 3.2.1 ESA will become live in 1st October 2008 and the project will be started as soon as the statutory implements are laid, and guidance provided by DWP. It will continue for a period of consolidation to assist affected customers, stakeholders and officers with the transition and to consider ongoing procedural changes as the volume of cases increases.

We will need to ensure all our stakeholders are aware of these changes and how that may affect them. New information leaflets will be required and all staff will need to be re trained to take account of the changes. There will also be the need for a project manager.

- 3.2.2 It should be noted there are also major software development to accommodate these changes, which the software supplier is charging for.

3.3 Options

- 3.3.1 To note the report & forecast spend on this project
- 3.3.2

- 3.4 Reasons for Recommendation(s)
- 3.4.1 To provide an update on the planned expenditure
- 3.4.2

4. Risk and Financial Implications

- 4.1 Risk
- 4.1.1 None
- 4.2 Financial
- 4.2.1 Proforma B attached

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 None

6. Other Implications

- a) Equalities: The introduction of this legislation will affect new customers who are disabled and incapacitated and will ensure that their benefits are calculated in accordance with revised legislation.

7. Alignment to Council Priorities

- 7.1 To be legally compliant

8. Ward/Community Affected

- 8.1 All within partner authorities

Background Papers

Funding for introduction of Employment Support Allowance (ESA) – Joint Committee 21st May 2008.

Lead Contact Officer:

Name/Post: Rod Urquhart / Support Services Manager

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Key Decision Status (Executive Decisions only):

Appendices attached to this report:

ESA Expenditure forecast

Proforma B

Appendix A

ARP Employment Support Allowance (ESA) Costs Estimate

One off/Capital costs	Notes	08/09	09/10	Revenue costs	08/09
Project Manager / Additional Staffing	Needed to project manage changes	27,000	-		
Capita Software Costs (Breckland Council)	Software Suppliers costs	15,817	-	Annual Software Maintenance Breckland	-
Capita Software Costs (East Cambs District Council)	Software Suppliers costs	7,661	-	Annual Software Maintenance East Cambs	-
Capita Software Costs (Forest Heath District Council)	Software Suppliers costs	6,750	-	Annual Software Maintenance Forest Heath	-
Leaflets / Publicity	Needed to publicise the changes	3,500			
Claim Forms	New claim forms needed for LHA	3,000			
Training	Training for staff & outside organisations	6,000			
Recruitment costs for staff		-			
Recruitment costs for staff		-			
Contingency		2,483			
DWP Primary Funding		-			
DWP Secondary Funding		-£67,173			
One off / Capital Total:		72,211	-	Ongoing/Revenue Total:	-
Total Cost Year 1		72,211			

Anglia Revenues Partnership

**Report of Operational Board to the
JOINT COMMITTEE – 10TH SEPTEMBER 2008**

Author Rod Urquhart

SINGLE HOUSING BENEFIT SCAN (HBIASD) UPDATE REPORT

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide members with an update on this project & seek approval to re-distribute the balance of the funding, from the Department of Work & Pensions (DWP) to the three partners.

2. Recommendations

- It is recommended that the Committee:
- 2.1 Note the contents of the report
- 2.2 Approves the re-distribution of the balance of funding to the partner authorities.

Note: In preparing this report, due regard has been had to equality of opportunity, human rights, prevention of crime and disorder, environmental and risk management considerations as appropriate. Relevant officers have been consulted in relation to any legal, financial or human resources implications and comments received are reflected in the report.

3. Information, Issues and Options

3.1 Background

- 3.1.1 From April 2008 the DWP has introduced a new scheme for providing statistical data, replacing the previous paper based format. The new scheme has been designed to improve the quality of data and reduce the need to complete statistical returns. The DWP have fully funded this project via a specific grant.

- 3.1.2 A previous report was taken to the Joint Committee on 28th February 2008 seeking approval that the money received by the DWP was pooled together. Approval for this was granted

3.2 Issues

- 3.2.1 The implementation of this project has gone smoothly & we are now transmitting files to the DWP via the Single Housing Benefit Extract (SHBE) on a monthly basis. As such this project has now been signed off. As a result of the Partnership's purchasing power we have gained significant discounts in software costs, which has left a surplus of £10,721 in the pooled funding. The costs breakdown is shown in Appendix A to this report.

- 3.2.2 It is suggested that the funding surplus is divided up & re-distributed on the following basis (Amount of Authority Funding / Total Funding) x Amount of Surplus. The amount of distribution per authority is shown in Appendix A to this report.

3.3 Options

- 3.3.1 To note the report & approve the re-distribution of the surplus
- 3.3.2 To reject the report & leave the surplus in a reserve account

3.4 Reasons for Recommendation(s)

- 3.4.1 To provide an update on the project & re-distribute the surplus to the authorities

based on the methodology in 3.2.2 above.

3.4.2

4. Risk and Financial Implications

4.1 Risk

4.1.1 None

4.2 Financial

4.2.1 Proforma B attached

5. Legal Implications

5.1 None

6. Other Implications

None.

7. Alignment to Council Priorities

7.1 To be legally compliant

8. Ward/Community Affected

8.1 All within partner authorities

Background Papers

REPORT ON CHANGES TO THE DWP HBSD/IAD RETURN – Joint Committee 28th February 2008.

Lead Contact Officer:

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Key Decision Status (Executive Decisions only):

Appendices attached to this report:

HBIASD Report Appendix A

Proforma B

Appendix A

ARP HBIASD Costings

One off/Capital costs	Notes	08/09	09/10	Revenue costs	08/09
Capita Software Costs	Software Suppliers costs	25,000			
Consultancy	Software Suppliers costs	1,500			
Aspiren Software Costs	Software Suppliers costs	2,820			
Total Costs		29,320			
DWP Funding (Breckland)		-14,028			
DWP Funding (Forest Heath)		-12,899			
DWP Funding (East Cambs)		-13,114			
Total Funding		-40,041			
Surplus		-10,721	-	Ongoing/Revenue Total:	-
Re-distribution of funding (Breckland)	(14028 / 40041) * -£10721	-3,756			
Re-distribution of funding (FHDC)	(12899 / 40041) * -£10722	-3,454			
Re-distribution of funding (ECDC)	(13114 / 40041) * -£10723	-3,511			