

BRECKLAND COUNCIL
FOREST HEATH DISTRICT COUNCIL
EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
ST EDMUNDSBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL
FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL
WAVENEY DISTRICT COUNCIL
SUFFOLK COASTAL DISTRICT COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

ANGLIA REVENUES AND BENEFITS PARTNERSHIP JOINT COMMITTEE

Held on Tuesday, 28 March 2017 at 10.00 am in the
Level 5 Meeting Room, Breckland House, St Nicholas Street, Thetford IP24 1BT

PRESENT

Mr D Ambrose Smith	Mr I Houlder
Mr C Seaton (Chairman)	Mr R Kerry
Mr M Barnard (Vice-Chairman)	Mr S H Chapman-Allen (Substitute Member)
Mr S. Edwards	

In Attendance

Paul Corney	- Head of ARP
Christine Marshall	- Executive Director Commercialisation (S151 Officer)
Adrian Mills	- Strategic Manager (Benefits)
Stuart Philpot	- Strategic Manager (Support Services) ARP
Jo Andrews	- Strategic Manager (Revenues)
Ian Smith	- Principal Accountant
Julie Britton	- Democratic Services Officer
Rob Bridge	- Corporate Director (Fenland)
Jill Korwin	- Director (Forest Heath & St Edmundsbury)
Brendan Arnold	- Chief Finance Officer and Corporate Director

Action
By

Opening Remarks

The Chairman announced that Rob Bridge, the Corporate Director of Fenland District Council would be leaving shortly and his replacement Brendan Arnold would be joining the Joint Committee meetings as the new Chief Finance Officer and Corporate Director in April 2017.

The Chairman thanked Rob for his contributions over the years and wished him well for the future.

Christine Marshall, the new Executive Director for Commercialisation & S151 Officer for Breckland Council was welcomed to her first meeting.

8/17 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 1)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 January 2017 were agreed.

9/17 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Dimoglou (Breckland Council) and Emma Grima, East Cambridgeshire District Council. Substitutes

**Action
By**

in attendance were Councillor Sam Chapman-Allen and Ian Smith respectively.

10/17 URGENT BUSINESS (AGENDA ITEM 3)

None.

11/17 DECLARATIONS (AGENDA ITEM 4)

None.

12/17 PERFORMANCE REPORT (STANDING ITEM) (AGENDA ITEM 5)

(a) Operational Performance

A detailed overview of the Operational Performance Report up to 31 December 2016 was provided.

Benefits performance continued to be meet profiled targets and was on course to achieve year end targets except for Waveney due to Universal Credit issues. The Head of ARP stated that in comparison to the final quarter, Waveney had improved considerably and already had new processes in place which would be to the benefit of all.

DWP plans to introduce expansion of data exchange had been delayed until later in the year. ARP continued to take a lead role in influencing and shaping national procedures regarding DWP working practices for the investigation of Housing Benefit.

As far as revenue was concerned, performance continued to meet targets in all areas with the exception of Non-Domestic Rates collection for Suffolk Coastal, Breckland and Fenland District Councils. The reasons behind the drop in NNDR were due to appeals for Doctors surgeries and other changes in valuations; the Finance Team was aware and had made provision in budgets for this shortfall.

Funding had been secured from Suffolk and Norfolk and County Councils; and negotiations continued with Cambridgeshire County Council; therefore, the further recovery work for this financial year would continue.

The Enforcement Team continued to perform well having collected £4.5m since the Team started of which £3.2m had been in this financial year. The surplus amount was highlighted.

An NNDR revaluation would be taking place from 1 April 2017. All NNDR databases had been updated accordingly. The various changes that had been introduced by Government were highlighted.

Councillor Edwards asked if he could have some updated figures that he could present to his Cabinet meeting.

The Chairman passed on his thanks to the Enforcement Team as they had exceeded expectations.

360,000+ various annual bills had been sent out and the external mailing target had been met. The layout of the Council Tax bill design had been

**Action
By**

simplified to maximise the effectiveness of getting the correct information to the customer and as part of the preparation for channel shift every customer had the ability to sign up and view their Council Tax, Business rates, benefits payments and E-Billing via the ARP website. E-Billing and on-line accounts were already on the increase and the numbers would be brought to the next Joint Committee meeting.

(b) Balanced Scorecard

Members were provided with a detailed overview of the Balance Scorecards for each of the seven partners.

In response to a question as to whether the proposed targets had been agreed, it was noted that the targets had been set by the budget.

The targets for 2017/18 were agreed.

(c) Financial Performance

The Head of ARP informed Members that income was mainly up due to the increase of the Bailiff service (£319k higher than budget) and this was an achieved efficiency that had been reflected in the budget for future years. An additional £48k rechargeable income had been achieved, and this related to a combination of recharging for additional inserts that Councils have requested and other income from providing services.

The employee underspend was due to a combination of vacancies during the first nine months of the year, these posts had now been filled; additional savings had been made relating to pensions as some staff had opted out.

13/17 WELFARE REFORM UPDATE (STANDING ITEM) (AGENDA ITEM 6)

The Strategic Manager (Benefits) provided Members with a detailed overview of the report.

Members were informed that ARP was on track to spend most of the discretionary housing payment grant funded by the DWP.

ARP was working very closely with its customers following the introduction of the new 'Two Child Limit' legislation, the details of which were explained.

Social rented sector rent restrictions had been delayed by 1 year to April 2019. ARP would be keeping a close watch on this matter.

The report was otherwise noted.

14/17 TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME UPDATE (AGENDA ITEM 7)

The Head of ARP presented the report which concerned the progress to date in respect of the Transformation Programme.

The Transformation Programme had been split into three distinct areas; reduction in avoidable contact and automation of processes (digital), commercial partnership and trading opportunities and organisational vision and development.

**Action
By**

All of the challenges relating to ARP over the next few years in relation to organisational vision and development would require a strong and resilient work force that could flex and change with the ever changing demands. A number of elements had already been put in place that would continue to ensure that the ARP Team were skilled and had the opportunity to become multi-skilled.

The Chairman felt that the amount of income generated by the Enforcement Team was excellent.

In response to a question as to where ARP was in terms of promoting its trading arm, the Head of ARP advised that a Business Plan and business cases were being developed to bring to the Joint Committee and the Company Board.

The report was otherwise noted.

15/17 FORTHCOMING ISSUES (STANDING ITEM) (AGENDA ITEM 8)

None.

16/17 NEXT MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 9)

The arrangements for the next meeting on Tuesday, 20 June at 10.00am were noted. The Chairman and Councillor Ambrose-Smith conveyed their apologies for this meeting.

17/17 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC (AGENDA ITEM 10)

RESOLVED that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

18/17 RISK BASED VERIFICATION POLICY REVIEW REPORT - MARCH 2017 (AGENDA ITEM 11)

The Strategic Manager (Benefits) presented the report and the key points were highlighted. Members were being asked to approve the continuance of the Risk Based Verification Policy.

It was noted that all information was shared with the external auditors.

RESOLVED that the recommendations as listed in the report be approved.

19/17 PARTNERSHIP WORKING THROUGH SECTION 101 AGREEMENT (AGENDA ITEM 12)

The Head of ARP provided Members with a detailed overview of the report.

The recommendations were highlighted and it was

RESOLVED not to proceed with the proposal.