

ANGLIA REVENUES PARTNERSHIP

Report of Paul Corney - Head of ARP

To: ARP Joint Committee, 20 September 2016

Subject: The Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP) Transformation Programme.

Purpose: To recommend the Transformation Programme at Appendix A is approved and to report on the progress in respect of the plan.

Recommendation(s):

- That the progress in respect of the Transformation Programme is noted.
- That the ARP Joint Committee Approve the Transformation Programme at Appendix A

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 In December 2015 a revised Service Delivery Plan was agreed by the Joint Committee. The Service Delivery Plan has been developed since then by the Operational Improvement Board into a Transformation Programme.

1.1.2 The ARP Partner Councils face a number of significant challenges and changes in the next few years that are likely to result in root and branch changes to finances and services and the ARP must prepare for these changes.

1.1.3 In setting the ARP medium term financial strategy, members agreed that savings targets should be incorporated into the budget from 2017/18 onwards to reflect the estimated loss of grants from central Government.

1.1.4 The overarching purpose of the programme will be to secure continued and improved delivery of excellent services to customers whilst creating efficiencies that make savings equivalent to the estimated loss of government grant funding.

1.1.5 A part of the overall strategy also relates to achieving efficiencies in levels of staff required to process the work we receive which can then be used where trading opportunities are identified through the ARP trading Company and where members agree to business cases that may be brought forward from the commercial strand.

1.1.6 The Programme Management of the programme will include additional resource where necessary to support the Strategic Management Team to deliver such a critical service transformation. The Programme is being monitored by the Operational Improvement Board.

1.1.7 The transformation programme has taken the actions in the service delivery plan and built them and additional actions into three strands; Reduction in Avoidable Contact and Automation of Processes (Digital), Commercial, Partnership and Trading Opportunities, and Organisational Vision and Development.

1.2 Avoidable contact – Digital strand.

1.2.1 The ARP meet regularly with all partner customer services teams (CS) to resolve any issues and to determine potential improvements in the ways that work flows from the CS teams to the ARP back office.

- 1.2.2 As part of the transformation programme the CS teams meet with ARP officers every 2 weeks to develop the actions in reducing avoidable contact and increasing the availability of online services available to customers.
- 1.2.3 The programme of actions included in this strand of the transformation have been split into 3 distinct projects which will be progressed and implemented by teams made up of officers from partner councils CS teams and the ARP:
- Digital services (project manager Chris Bolton from West Suffolk) – this project will look at the most common service requests for Revenues and Benefits and will look to redesign the processes and introduce the use of online facilities wherever possible. It will introduce some online forms that customers, and officers on customer's behalf, will complete that will automatically update the back office systems.
 - Digital communications (project manager Darren Knight from East Suffolk) – this project will look to improve the website through mapping the most common transactions and redesigning the pages to make customers journeys as easy as possible. This project will also look at use of other social media such as Twitter, YouTube and Facebook developing videos to describe how to access entitlements to council tax discounts and providing other such information.
 - Other communications (project manager Geoff Kent from Fenland) – this project will review letters and other written communications that currently lead to the highest number of customer enquiries to make them easier to understand for customers and to include all relevant information to seek to avoid the need for contact
- 1.2.4 The CS forum is developing project initiation documents and business cases which will detail the potential savings that may be made through this work both within each CS team and the ARP.

1.3 Commercial, Partnership and Trading Opportunities

- 1.3.1 The Income generation and Commercial strand looks to develop potential areas for additional income to the ARP partners in a number of ways: increased revenue from collection of Council Tax and Business Rates; additional partners in areas where we can create greater efficiencies such as the Enforcement team; trading opportunities through the ARP trading company; and efficiencies in the running of operations.
- 1.3.2 Some elements of the transformation programme are already progressing well such as the expansion of the Enforcement Agency. Two authorities are joining the Agency which will bring about greater economies of scale leading to increased collection of Council Tax and Business Rates
- 1.3.3 The Enforcement Agency business case cautiously anticipated that surpluses of £150k would be achieved in 2016/17 through the cases passed to the agency from the ARP partners, early indications are that surpluses will be significantly higher than estimated.
- 1.3.4 The Fraud and Compliance team are also producing excellent results in identifying incorrect and fraudulent claims for discounts, they are also identifying business rates hereditaments that have changed use or have grown in size. The performance report provides more information.
- 1.3.5 The ARP have trialled tenancy fraud investigations and we have been approached by Housing Associations asking for us to carry out work for them on an ongoing basis in the future. This work would be through the ARP trading company once all partners have approved their councils becoming shareholders of the company.
- 1.3.6 As previously advised research is taking place into developing business cases for the expansion of services into other areas that fit with current ARP transactional services.

- 1.3.7 The ARP is also offering help to other Councils concerning improvements that they can make in automation of data received from the DWP and in general terms concerning the management of their services. In the future a business case may be brought concerning trading such services through the ARP trading company

1.4 Organisational Vision and Development

- 1.4.1 All of the challenges relating to ARP over the next few years will require a strong and resilient work force who can flex and change with the ever changing demands. This will require clear and focussed planning and communication.
- 1.4.2 A number of elements have been put in place or have been started that will continue to ensure that the ARP team are skilled and have the opportunity to become multi-skilled, this will help us to adapt to change in the future such as Universal Credit by redeploying staff to other areas of work.

These measures include:

- A process has started to develop a bottom up approach to define the values and culture of the organisation – members will be asked to work with officers to determine the ARP vision and values
- A workforce strategy is being developed which will determine the measures required to develop the organisation and a resource strategy
 - A training needs assessment has taken place and a programme of training is being developed using existing partner resources wherever possible.
 - A learning and Development plan to increase skills and knowledge has been partially designed to give necessary training and support in various service areas and for different management levels within the ARP
 - The establishment will be reviewed in the context of future demand and stability of existing resource; retirees, long term sick, use of agency staff and staff retention.

1.5 Transformation Programme resourcing.

- 1.5.1 Members have agreed that an investment fund taken from surpluses and new burdens funding carried forward from 2015/16 should be used with the agreement of OIB to develop and implement the necessary changes to generate income and savings of £266k in 2017/18 and £509k in 2018/19 included in the budget.
- 1.5.2 It is currently anticipated that the investment fund will meet the requirements of the actions described in this report however, if additional funds are needed then new burdens funding received in 2016/17 could be used upon OIB authorising expenditure.
- 1.5.3 The demands of the programme are great and so we will ensure that Programme Management resource will be provided to support the ARP Strategic Management team in introducing and implementing this change programme.
- 1.5.4 The Management of the Programme will seek to ensure that all of the strands are managed cohesively and work towards the same overall ambitions and goals.

2 Options

- To suggest changes and additions to the Transformation Programme.
- To approve the Transformation Programme.

3 Reasons for recommendations

A Transformation Programme expands upon the Service Delivery Plan and develops the actions required to achieve the short to medium term priorities of the ARP in delivering services as effectively, efficiently and economically as possible.

4 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Risk

If the Programme is not agreed then the direction and priorities of service delivery may lose focus. The Plan allows members to monitor and direct the development of service provision.

4.2 Financial

The Transformation Programme requires the ARP officers to monitor and report on financial matters of relevance to OIB and the Section 151 officers of the ARP.

4.3 Legal

None.

4.4 Equality and Diversity

Not applicable.

Background papers:- None

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Appendices attached to this report:

Appendix A – Transformation Programme