

ANGLIA REVENUES PARTNERSHIP

Report of Paul Corney - Head of ARP

To: ARP Joint Committee, 28 March 2017

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

Purpose: That the update on the Transformation Programme at Appendix 1 is noted and to report on the progress in respect of the plan.

Recommendation(s):

- That the progress in respect of the Transformation Programme is noted.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 In September 2016 a Transformation Programme was agreed by the Joint Committee. The programme took the place of a Service Delivery Plan and has been developed by the Operational Improvement Board.
- 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 is to secure continued and improved delivery of excellent services to customers whilst creating efficiencies and savings at least 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 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 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 met with ARP officers every 2 weeks to develop the actions in reducing avoidable contact and increasing the

availability of online services available to customers. These meetings are held 4 weekly now.

1.2.3 The programme of actions included in this strand of the transformation have been split into 3 distinct projects which will have been 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 is looking at the most common service requests for Revenues and Benefits and a number of workshops have been held to redesign 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 is looking to improve the website through mapping the most common transactions and redesigning the pages to make customers journeys as easy as possible. This project is also looking at the 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 – this project is reviewing 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 A forms designer and automated forms have been procured and this will facilitate automation of transactions. The design and introduction of new forms will be implemented during the 2017/18 financial year with the aim of achieving savings from 2018/19 as projected in Appendix 1

1.2.5 The yearend bills have been redesigned and a leaflet is being sent with them to encourage sign up to e-billing and online services. The customer services staff will also be encouraging sign up when dealing with customers. The sign up during 2017/18 will lead to savings in postage and other costs from 2018/19 the savings target is shown in Appendix 1

1.2.6 A social enterprise project is underway with the Lowestoft College to design 10 social media films covering the top five Council Tax and Housing Benefit enquiries. This project should direct customers to use the website.

1.2.7 This strand of the programme will lead to reduced footfall and telephone enquiries and it is estimated that savings of approximately £250k will be shared by the partners Customer teams and through reduction in postages. If the project is successful in its aims, each Authority will see a saving in its corporate customer services delivery.

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. South Norfolk District Council has already joined the Agency which will bring about greater economies of scale leading to increased collection of Council Tax and Business Rates and two other Councils are considering joining in the future.

1.3.3 From the 01/04/2017 the Section 113 agreement with Norwich City Council will commence and The ARP Strategic Management Team will also manage Norwich

City's Revenues and Benefits team. The agreement will generate efficiencies of £80k per annum initially and is likely to lead to other efficiencies in the future.

- 1.3.4 The in-house Enforcement Agency continues to provide a more sympathetic service to our residents and it is also anticipated that, although the initial business case estimated surpluses of £150k, surpluses will be over £500k. The additional surpluses arise from a deliberately cautious initial business case due to the fact that new legislation made it unclear how matters would unfold.
- 1.3.5 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.
- 1.3.6 The ARP have trialled tenancy fraud investigations and we have been approached by Housing Associations asking us to carry out work for them on an ongoing basis in the future. This work would be through the ARP trading company once the Companies business plan has been agreed.
- 1.3.7 The ARP have also offered 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 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, potentially including trading.

These measures include:

- A process has started to develop a bottoms up approach to define the values and behaviours that customers and employees would expect.
 - The ARP have staff employed by 4 Councils and each Council has a defined culture and value system
 - The Operational Improvement Board are considering the link between each council's own corporate vision and the ARP contribution to those visions
- 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 has been developed using existing partner resources wherever possible.
 - A learning and Development plan to increase skills and knowledge has been 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 agreed that an investment fund taken from surpluses and new burdens funding carried forward from 2015/16 will be used with the agreement of OIB to develop

and implement the necessary changes to generate income and savings of £531k in 2017/18 and £1017k 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 and 2017/18 could be used upon OIB authorising expenditure.

1.5.3 It will be challenging to deliver all of the elements of the programme however early indications are very positive, if the targets in the transformation programme are achieved then it is estimated that the measures detailed in the transformation programme, shown in Appendix 1, will lead to savings and income that will meet or exceed the £531k and £1.017 Million efficiency target in the budget for 2017/18 and 2018/19

2 Options

- To suggest changes and additions to the Transformation Programme.
- To note the progress made in 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.

The programme may not meet all of the savings and income targets it is aiming to deliver.

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

Lead Contact Officer

Name/Post: Paul Corney (Head of the ARP)

Email: paul.corney@angliarevenues.gov.uk

Appendices attached to this report:

Appendix 1 – Updated Transformation Programme (Ready4business)