

A G E N D A

ANGLIA REVENUES & BENEFITS PARTNERSHIP JOINT COMMITTEE

DATE & TIME Tuesday, 21st September, 2021 at 11.00 am

VENUE: Level 5 Meeting Room, Breckland House, St Nicholas Street, Thetford.
IP24 1BT

For the attention of:

Cllr David Ambrose-Smith, East Cambridgeshire District Council
(Chairman)
Cllr Jan French, Fenland District Council (Vice-Chairman)
Cllr Sarah Broughton, West Suffolk District Council
Cllr Maurice Cook, East Suffolk Council
Cllr Philip Cowen, Breckland Council

Should members of the public wish to attend this meeting, please email
democraticservices@breckland.gov.uk

PART A **ITEMS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

	<u>Page(s) herewith</u>
1. <u>MINUTES</u> To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2021.	1 - 6
2. <u>APOLOGIES</u> To receive apologies for absence.	
3. <u>URGENT BUSINESS</u> 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.	
4. <u>DECLARATIONS</u>	
5. <u>PERFORMANCE REPORT (STANDING ITEM)</u> Report by Adrian Mills, Strategic Manager (Billing & Benefits) ARP.	7 - 38

Democratic Services
Elizabeth House, Walpole Loke,
Dereham Norfolk, NR19 1EE
Contact: Julie Britton (Democratic Services Officer)
Email: julie.britton@breckland.gov.uk

Date: Thursday, 16 September 2021

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6. <u>WELFARE REFORM UPDATE (STANDING ITEM)</u> Report by Adrian Mills, Strategic Manager (Billing & Benefits) ARP.	39 - 42
7. <u>ARP FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE 2021-22 (STANDING ITEM)</u> Report by Alison Chubbock, Assistant Director Finance (BDC).	43 - 46
8. <u>FORTHCOMING ISSUES (STANDING ITEM)</u> To note any items.	
9. <u>NEXT MEETING</u> To note the arrangements for the next meeting on Tuesday, 7 December 2021 at 11am, Level 5 Meeting Room, Breckland House, St Nicholas Street, Thetford.	

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, 22 June 2021 at 11.00 am in the
Carnegie Rooms, Cage Lane, Thetford. IP24 2EA**

PRESENT

Cllr Philip Cowen	Cllr Maurice Cook
Cllr David Ambrose-Smith	Cllr David Connor (Substitute Member)
Cllr Sarah Broughton	

In Attendance

Paul Corney	- Head of ARP
Sam Anthony	- Head of HR & OD (Fenland)
Alison Chubbock	- Assistant Director Finance (Section 151 Officer)
Lorraine King	- Operations Manager (Benefits & Billing) ARP
Rachael Mann	- Assistant Director (Resources & Performance) (West Suffolk)
Brian Mew	- Chief Finance Officer & S151 Officer (East Suffolk)
Adrian Mills	- Strategic Manager (Billing & Benefits) ARP
Ian Smith	- Finance Manager & S151 Officer (East Cambs)
Julie Britton	- Democratic Services Officer

Chairman's Opening Remarks

The outgoing Chairman, Councillor Cowen thanked everyone within the ARP Partnership for dealing with all the challenges in what had been an incredibly difficult year, yet so much had still been achieved which he felt had been a great success.

14/21 CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR (AGENDA ITEM 1)

After being duly proposed and seconded and with no other nominations being made it was:

RESOLVED that Councillor David Ambrose-Smith (East Cambridgeshire DC) be appointed as Chairman for the ensuing year.

After being duly proposed and seconded and with no other nominations being made it was:

RESOLVED that Councillor Jan French (Fenland DC) be appointed as Vice-Chair for the ensuing year.

Councillor David Ambrose-Smith in the Chair.

Action By

Action By

15/21 TREASURER (AGENDA ITEM 2)

After being duly proposed and seconded and with no other nominations being made it was **RESOLVED** that:

Breckland Council be appointed as Treasurer for the ensuing year.

16/21 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 3)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

17/21 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 4)

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Jan French. Cllr David Connor was in attendance as substitute.

18/21 URGENT BUSINESS (AGENDA ITEM 5)

None.

19/21 DECLARATIONS (AGENDA ITEM 6)

None.

20/21 ANGLIA REVENUES PARTNERSHIP SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN AND RISK REGISTER (AGENDA ITEM 7)

Paul Corney, Head of ARP presented the Service Delivery Plan and Risk Register.

The pandemic had significantly impacted the services but was continuing to lessen and considerable progress had been made on the Service Delivery Plan.

An error on the Service Plan was highlighted, Members were informed that on the appendix under Maximising Taxbase NNDR, the last three boxes in that row should read as follows, and had been replaced:

Planning, external services such as analyse local and ARP	Data to be shared so that taxbase is maximised and relief to be reviewed regularly	A data matching exercise will take place to identify cases where SBRR is incorrectly claimed because there is more than one business in the Company. A timetable for review of all cases will be prepared with a view to starting the review next financial year once Covid releases resource.
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Also, under this section the timetable, mentioned above, had already been produced to enable periodic review of reliefs and exemptions and progress thus far had been quite pleasing. The assistance provided to customers and the partnership working between teams across all councils and the ARP teams had been a great piece of work by all.

The Chairman, Councill Ambrose-Smith referred to paragraph 3.10 of the

Action By

report in respect of the appeal from Hospitals for business rate relief that had been withdrawn and reminded Members that this could have ended up being a huge cost to the Partnership.

The Service Delivery Plan and Risk Register was otherwise noted.

21/21 PERFORMANCE REPORTS (STANDING ITEM) (AGENDA ITEM 8)

Adrian Mills, Strategic Manager (Billing & Benefits) presented the reports.

He was pleased to report that all partner authorities combined for 2020/2021 were on target; however, the Council Tax collection rates for Breckland, East Suffolk and Fenland DCs were behind target, due to the magistrate's courts not being open at the time and therefore reducing the amount that could have been collected.

The Enforcement Team had also recently taken on the collection of parking fines for East and West Suffolk Council's and were due to receive its first cases shortly.

With effect from March 2020, all recovery actions were temporarily suspended until the summer and therefore the amount collected through these actions had been less than in the last financial year. Income of £680K in total had been received this financial year compared to £1.37M last year.

The 3 March 2021 budget, the Government announced that retail, hospitality and leisure relief would be extended into the 2021/22 financial year but from 1 July 2021 would be reduced to 66%. Revised bills would be issued in June 2021 to reduce the rate relief to 66%.

For Council Tax, the Team had completed 17.5% more documents this year compared to last year yet outstanding work had been below the highest levels it reached the previous year.

The Council Tax Support Hardship Fund awards were issued to every qualifying working age customer by the end of July 2020 and have continued to award a payment to every entitled new working age Council Tax Support customer who made a claim throughout the year. Expenditure had been closely monitored to ensure the fund for each Council had not been overspent.

Targets had been achieved for both Council Tax Support and Benefits performance, despite the increased demand attributed to COVID-19.

Throughout the year the Team had seen significant increases in claims and had increased by approximately a third on 2019/2020. In April 2020, the Local Council Tax Support schemes changed for all partners to include a 'tolerance rule' which was applied to monthly Universal Credit Data Share (UCDS) records from DWP.

The new rule meant that changes in Universal Credit of under £15.00 per week were ignored by the software system and were automatically processed. An average of just under 4000 UCDS records had been received weekly from the DWP and 53% of these had been fully automated. The introduction of the 'tolerance' rule had reduced the number of Council Tax Support re-assessments resulting from DWP UCDS records by 32%, which

Action By

was in line with the results of modelling undertaken for the consultation. This in turn had reduced the number of Council Tax adjustment notices, contact and refund requests and allowed customers more flexibility to manage their own payments.

The COVID 19 Track & Trace Self Isolation payment scheme had been extended by 3 months to 30 June 2021.

For 2021/22 all targets combined for all partner councils were on target except for Council Tax collections for Breckland and Business Rates collections for East Cambridgeshire DC.

For enforcement, £426K had been collected in April compared to £304k at the same point last year.

The Government had announced that they would fund further discretionary rate relief to businesses, further guidance was awaited.

In respect of benefits, performance had been achieved despite the increased demand attributed to Covid-19.

The Chairman referred to the Better Customer Journeys Programme in respect of who had set the complaint response timeframes from 28 to 21 calendar days. Members were informed that this was a 21day target that had been set by the Customer Strategy Team. More emphasis would be put on customer self-service sign-up which would have a quicker outcome.

Councillor Broughton asked if on-line forms were immediately uploaded onto the system. The Strategic Manager (Billing & benefits) explained that once the forms had been validated, they were then dealt with in the 'back office' system for those staff to pick up. The customer was in control of their data, but improvements were being made to this system.

The performance reports were otherwise noted.

22/21 WELFARE REFORM UPDATE (STANDING ITEM) (AGENDA ITEM 9)

Adrian Mills, Strategic Manager (Billing & Benefits) presented the report and updated Members with the following information.

At paragraph 2.18 - DWP were yet to publish a review of the CAB Help to Claim service but had confirmed that the CAB arrangement would continue into the 2021-2022 year, with a review underway for provision from 2022.

At paragraph 2.19 Members were informed that the Harrogate pilot had recommenced, the Pensioner Benefit would remain until at least 2025 and the £20 per week uplift for Universal Credit had been extended until September 2021.

Councillor Cowen raised concerns about the Help to Claim Service in respect of Breckland and South Norfolk's CAB service having been reduced and ultimately a real challenge for its customers.

The Strategic Manager (Billing & Benefits) was aware of some of the difficulties, but he hoped that DWP would take a wider look at the contracts in 2022. This matter would be discussed further.

Action By

Councillor Cowen also asked if the partnership would be looking at doing something itself rather than it being between DWP and the CAB.

Members were informed that until ARP had scope of the project itself and the terms nothing could be considered.

Councillor Cowen stated that all ARP Members could use their MPs but a briefing note would be helpful.

It was agreed that a briefing note would be prepared for Members to use when contacting their MPs.

AM

The Welfare Reform update was otherwise noted.

23/21 Q4 ARP FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE 2020-21 (AGENDA ITEM 10)

Alison Chubbock, the Assistant Director of Finance & S151 Officer (BDC) presented the report.

Each of the partner Councils provided full year financial information against budget for the ARP. The information had been collated to provide an overall financial performance report, to provide information to Joint Committee on the out-turn against budget.

The final out-turn for 2021 had increased slightly with an overspend against budget of £551K – further information relating to this overspend could be found at Appendix A

Councillor Broughton was aware that the overspend was mainly due to the delay to enforcement work but asked how long it would take the Partnership to get back on track.

Members were informed that an update would be provided in the quarterly financial reports for the current year.

Councillor Cowen felt that this was due to the impact of the pandemic that everyone faced but the Partnership was in a much better place than many other authorities and hopefully all would be back to normal in the next 12 months.

In response to a question, it was explained that the Joint Committee Agreement set out the variation in shares between each authority which could also be seen on the table under paragraph 1.4 of the report. The percentage shares for this area were based on the enforcement caseloads and number of properties as per the Agreement.

Councillor Cook hoped that this would be the only time that Members would see a deficit.

RESOLVED that:

1. the report and appendix be noted; and
2. the final full year variance as at 31 March 2021 be shared between the partner authorities in the approved shares.

24/21 FORTHCOMING ISSUES (STANDING ITEM) (AGENDA ITEM 11)

Members were informed that ARP had successfully appointed to the post of Jo Andrews who retired earlier in the year. The new post holder was from Harrogate and would commence employment early in September 2021.

25/21 NEXT MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 12)

The arrangements for the next meeting on Tuesday, 21 September 2021 at 11am were noted. Venue would be confirmed near the time.

Action By

The meeting closed at 11.40 am

CHAIRMAN



Joint Committee Performance Report

July 2021



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All Partner Councils Combined



Business Rates Collection					
	Q1	Jul-21	Q3	Q4	
2021/22	£ 51,853,578	£ 70,348,599	£ -	£ -	●
Target	£ 48,450,483	£ 65,292,208	£ 164,457,225	£ 206,288,251	●
2020/21	£ 40,382,156	£ 52,622,012	£ 109,252,556	£ 151,680,832	●
			Year End Target	£206,288,251	●

Council Tax Collection					
	Q1	Jul-21	Q3	Q4	
2021/22	£138,277,607	£182,846,147	£0	£0	●
Target	£135,996,887	£180,334,180	£403,621,187	£475,114,297	●
2020/21	£127,454,324	£168,298,594	£337,359,826	£454,493,276	●
			Year End Target	£475,114,297	●

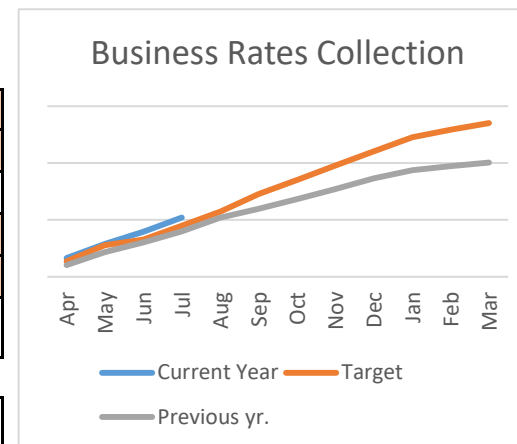
Number of Electronic Forms Received					
	Q1	Jul-21	Q3	Q4	
2021/22	14,052	19,994	0	0	●
2020/21	12,089	15,734	37,184	55,159	●
			Year End Target	55159	●

Fraud and Compliance	Q1	Jul-21	Q3	Q4	Yr Target
Single Person Discount Fraud	£501,867	£635,106	£0	£0	£500,000
Local Council Tax Support	£35,778	£43,650	£0	£0	£150,000
Tenancy Fraud	£195,720	£195,720	£0	£0	£400,000
Other (Council Tax and NDR)	£112,776	£177,799	£0	£0	£250,000
Fraud Identified	£846,141	£1,052,274	£0	£0	£1,300,000

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Business Rates

Business Rates Collection					
	Q1	Jul-21	Q3	Q4	
2021/22	£ 7,948,881	£ 10,414,888	£ -	£ -	●
Target	£ 6,522,632	£ 8,963,723	£ 22,059,422	£ 27,034,111	
Refunds	£ 207,992	£ 284,383	£ -	£ -	
2020/21	£ 6,046,513	£ 7,995,602	£ 17,330,233	£ 20,092,010	●



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Year End Target	£ 27,034,111	●
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Description

This shows the amount of money required to be collected within the financial year, payable to the NDR Collection Fund against the actual collection.

Narrative

Collection is on target. The issue of bills for premises that were receiving Expanded Retail Relief has effected the pattern of collection with the net collectable debt increasing significantly in June due to the instalments commencing in July. This has been compounded by some companies declining the relief which again impacts on the net collectable debt and instalments are only now due.

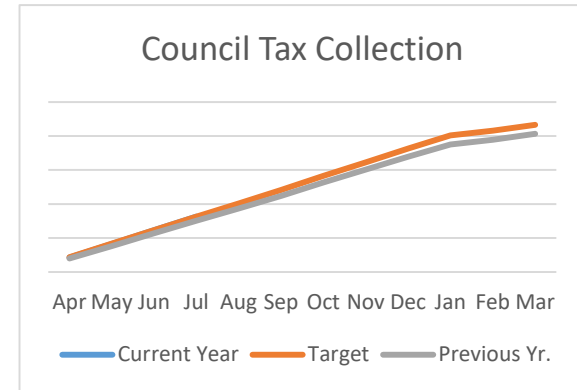
Further recovery action in 2021/22 has resulted in collection of £600.

Enforcement action in 2021/22 has resulted in collection of £9565.67. Not including Direct Payments.

Council Tax

Council Tax Collection						
	Q1	Jul-21	Q3	Q4		
2021/22	£ 24,672,337	£ 32,635,303	£ -	£ -		●
Target	£ 24,656,445	£ 32,572,998	£ 72,611,966	£ 86,608,060		
Refunds	£ 236,148	£ 327,864	£ -	£ -		
2020/21	£ 22,830,485	£ 30,112,686	£ 67,828,605	£ 81,338,654		●

Year End Target	£86,608,060	●
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Description

This shows the amount of money required to be collected within the financial year, payable to the Council Tax Collection Fund against the actual collection.

Narrative

Collection on target for the current financial year. In the last financial year formal recovery proceedings were delayed and some customers made extended arrangements into this financial year. We will continue to monitor the effect this may have on current year collection.

Further recovery action in 21/22 has resulted in collection of £38,396.27.

Enforcement action in 2021/22 has resulted in collection of £208921.35. Not including Direct Payments

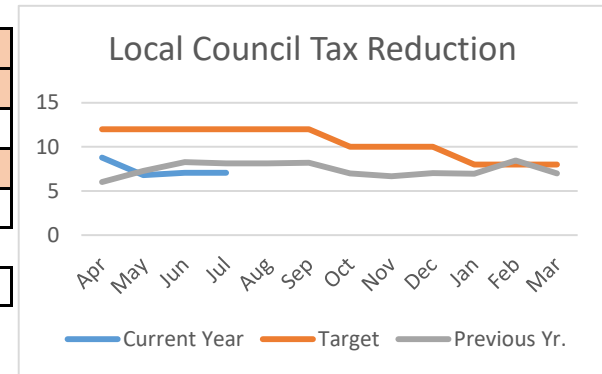
Charging Orders have been obtained to secure £387,828.64 debt.

Local Council Tax Reduction

Days to process Local Council Tax Support

	Q1	Jul-21	Q3	Q4	
2021/22	7.08	7.07	0.00	0.00	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2020/21	8.26	8.13	7.04	6.98	●

Year End Target	8	●
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Description

This indicator measures the average year to date number of days to process Council Tax reduction new claims and change of circumstances.

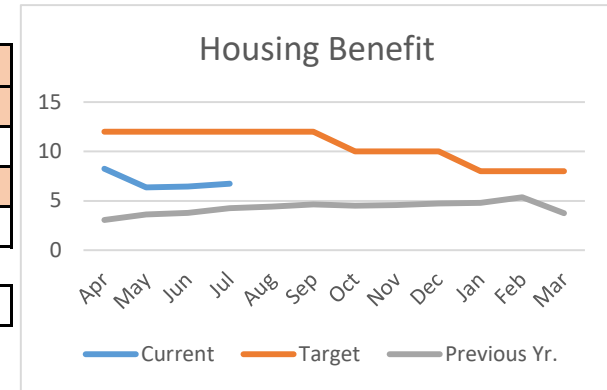
Narrative

This indicator has been met for this period and is expected to achieve year end target, subject to potential demand growth due to the economic impacts of the easing of Covid-19 funding schemes later in the year.

Housing Benefit

Days to process Housing Benefit					
	Q1	Jul-21	Q3	Q4	
2021/22	6.45	6.73	0.00	0.00	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2020/21	3.77	4.24	4.72	3.74	●

Year End Target	8	●
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Description

This indicator measures the average number of days to process Housing Benefit new claims and change of circumstances.

Narrative

This indicator has been met for this period and is expected to achieve year end target, subject to potential demand growth due to the economic impacts of the easing of Covid-19 funding schemes later in the year.

Fraud and Compliance

Following the transfer of Housing Benefit fraud to the DWP on the 1 September 2015, the team continue to be tasked, in accordance with the Business Case approved by Joint Committee, to identify and prevent fraud leading to an increase in Council Tax income in the following areas:

Local Council Tax Support, Single Person Discount, Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates.

The team continue to proactively seek opportunities to identify dwellings and businesses not registered or having had an undeclared change in use, leading to increased charges – including possible retrospective charges.

The team are also forging closer working relationships with a number of service areas in an attempt prevent and detect fraud and error.

A close working relationship with both Planning Enforcement has resulted in a number of positive outcomes.

More recent discussions with the extended Housing Team has resulted in positive moves and greater planned collaboration

The team continue to work closely with County in the management of the Fraud Hub in Norfolk. This is an attempt to match data sets across County to increase Council Tax and Business Rate income. Funding from Norfolk county continues to support Single Person Discount Reviews.

→ The team continue to work with both the Covid Grants Team and NNDR in post assurance business rates grants and further investigation and enquiries

	Q1	Jul-21	Q3	Q4
Single Person Discount Fraud	£129,085	£163,691	£0	£0
Local Council Tax Support	£2,516	£3,568	£0	£0
Tenancy Fraud	£0	£0	£0	£0
Other (Council Tax and NDR)	£6,820	£36,844	£0	£0
Fraud Identified	£138,422	£204,103	£0	£0



Performance Information July 2021

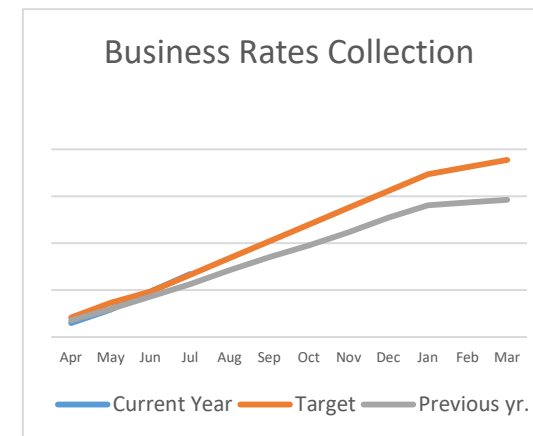


Business Rates

Business Rates Collection					
	Q1	Jul-21	Q3	Q4	
2021/22	£ 4,854,955	£ 6,707,456	£ -	£ -	●
Target	£ 4,850,561	£ 6,633,327	£ 15,552,925	£ 18,870,377	
Refunds	£ 215,059	£ 235,957	£ -	£ -	
2020/21	£ 4,321,819	£ 5,637,270	£ 12,702,067	£ 14,622,123	●

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Full Year Target	£18,870,377	●
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Description

This shows the amount of money required to be collected within the financial year, payable to the NNDR Collection Fund against the actual collection.

Narrative

Collection is on target. The issue of bills for premises that were receiving Expanded Retail Relief has effected the pattern of collection with the net collectable debt increasing significantly in June due to the instalments commencing in July. This has been compounded by some companies declining the relief which again impacts on the net collectable debt and instalments are only now due.

Further recovery action in 2021/22 has resulted in collection of £19,457.00.

Enforcement action in 21/22 has resulted in collection of ££8,925.43. Not including Direct Payments

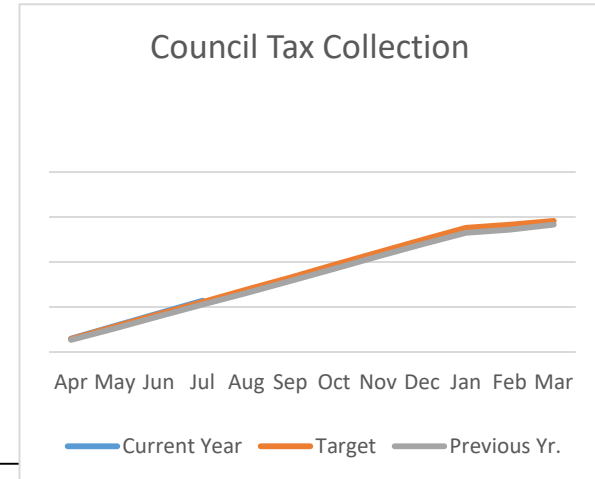


Council Tax



Council Tax Collection					
	Q1	Jul-21	Q3	Q4	
2021/22	£ 17,191,094	£ 22,822,507	£ -	£ -	●
Target	£ 16,766,400	£ 22,261,427	£ 49,781,334	£ 58,281,818	
Refunds	£ 192,547	£ 254,910	£ -	£ -	
2020/21	£ 15,859,812	£ 21,045,367	£ 47,847,998	£ 56,630,706	●

Year End Target	£ 58,281,818	●
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Description

This shows the amount of money required to be collected within the financial year, payable to the Council Tax Collection Fund against the actual collection.

Narrative

Collection is on target. The issue of bills for premises that were receiving Expanded Retail Relief has effected the pattern of collection with the net collectable debt increasing significantly in June due to the instalments commencing in July. This has been compounded by some companies declining the relief which again impacts on the net collectable debt and instalments are only now due.

Further recovery action in 2021/22 has resulted in collection of £26,059.47.

Enforcement action in 2021/22 has resulted in collection of £126811.51. Not including Direct Payments.

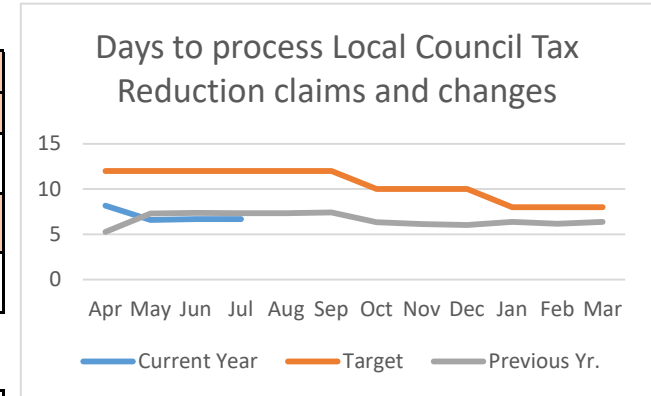
Charging Orders have been obtained to secure £317,920.82 debt.



Local Council Tax Reduction



Days to process Local Council Tax Support					
	Q1	Jul-21	Q3	Q4	
2021/22	6.68	6.67	0.00	0.00	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2020/21	7.37	7.32	6.03	6.36	●



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Year End Target	8	●
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Description

This indicator measures the average number of days to process Council Tax reduction new claims and change of circumstances.

Narrative

This indicator has been met for this period and is expected to achieve year end target, subject to potential demand growth due to the economic impacts of the easing of Covid-19 funding schemes later in the year.

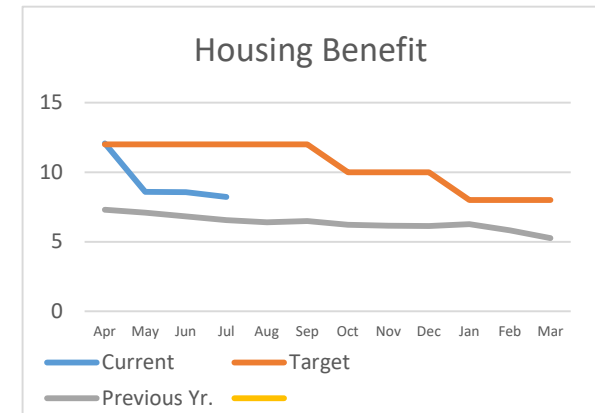


Housing Benefit



Days to process Housing Benefit					
	Q1	Jul-21	Q3	Q4	
2021/22	8.57	8.22	0.00	0.00	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2020/21	6.82	6.55	6.14	5.26	●

Year End Target	8	●
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Description

This indicator measures the average number of days to process Housing Benefit new claims and change of circumstances.

Narrative

This indicator has been met for this period and is expected to achieve year end target, subject to potential demand growth due to the economic impacts of the easing of Covid-19 funding schemes later in the year.



Fraud and Compliance



Fraud and Compliance

Following the transfer of Housing Benefit fraud to the DWP on the 1 September 2015, the team continue to be tasked, in accordance with the Business Case approved by Joint Committee, to identify and prevent fraud leading to an increase in Council Tax income in the following areas:

Local Council Tax Support, Single Person Discount, Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates.

The review of newly awarded Single Person Discounts continues to provide positive outcomes.

The team are working with the largest Social Housing provider in the authority to tackle Right to Buy and subletting abuse.

The team continue to seek opportunities to identify dwellings and businesses not registered or having had an undeclared change in use, leading to increased charges – including possible retrospective charges.

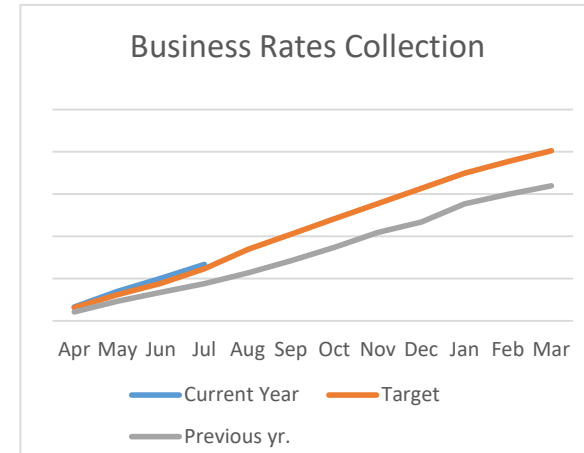
The team continue working with Cambridgeshire County in setting up the Fraud Hub in Cambridgeshire. This is an attempt to match data sets across County to increase Council Tax and Business Rate income. Ongoing discussions relating to the business case continue having been delayed due to Covid 19 activities. A presentation of the NFI Fraud Hub has now taken place to assess the software requirement to data match. Once operating this will align the work of the fraud team across the partnership.

	Q1	Jul-21	Q3	Q4
Single Person Discount Fraud	£51,848	£53,680	£0	£0
Local Council Tax Support	£927	£927	£0	£0
Tenancy Fraud	£93,000	£93,000	£0	£0
Other (Council Tax and NDR)	£58,291	£78,366	£0	£0
Fraud Identified	£204,065	£225,973	£0	£0

Business Rates

Business Rates Collection					
	Q1	Jul-21	Q3	Q4	
2021/22	£ 20,107,177	£ 26,715,627	£ -	£ -	●
Target	£ 17,758,942	£ 24,684,865	£ 62,660,988	£ 80,506,639	
Refunds	£ 467,003	£ 947,257	£ -	£ -	
2020/21	£ 13,586,679	£ 17,630,581	£ 46,751,882	£ 63,912,082	●

Year End Target	80,506,639	●
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Description

This shows the amount of money required to be collected within the financial year, payable to the NNDR Collection Fund against the actual collection.

Narrative

Collection is on target. The issue of bills for premises that were receiving Expanded Retail Relief has effected the pattern of collection with the net collectable debt increasing significantly in June due to the instalments commencing in July. This has been compounded by some companies declining the relief which again impacts on the net collectable debt and instalments are only now due.

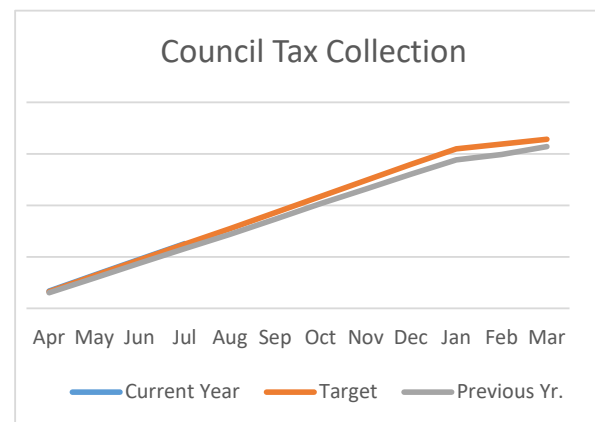
Further recovery action in 2021/22 has resulted in collection of £22,612.66.

Enforcement action in 2021/22 has resulted in collection of £33,482.86. Not including Direct Payments.

Council Tax

Council Tax Collection					
	Q1	Jul-21	Q3	Q4	
2021/22	£ 47,659,907	£ 62,846,002	£ -	£ -	●
Target	£ 46,989,812	£ 62,318,242	£ 139,808,907	£ 164,143,078	
Refunds	£ 523,435	£ 729,640	£ -	£ -	
2020/21	£ 43,986,884	£ 57,939,652	£ 130,268,131	£ 157,025,532	●

Year End Target	164,143,078	●
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21

Description

This shows the amount of money required to be collected within the financial year, payable to the Council Tax Collection Fund against the actual collection.

Narrative

Collection is on target for the current financial year. In the last financial year formal recovery proceedings were delayed and some customers made extended arrangements into this financial year. We will continue to monitor the effect this may have on current year collection.

Further recovery action in 2021/22 has resulted in collection of £52,689.80.

Enforcement action in 2021/22 has resulted in collection of £300,091.49. Not including Direct Payments

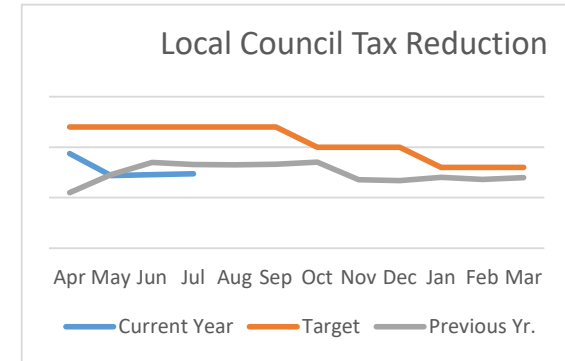


Local Council Tax Reduction



Days to process Local Council Tax Support					
	Q1	Jul-21	Q3	Q4	
2021/22	7.27	7.37	0.00	0.00	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2020/21	8.49	8.28	6.70	6.98	●

Year End Target	8	●
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23

Description

This indicator measures the average number of days to process Council Tax reduction new claims and change of circumstances.

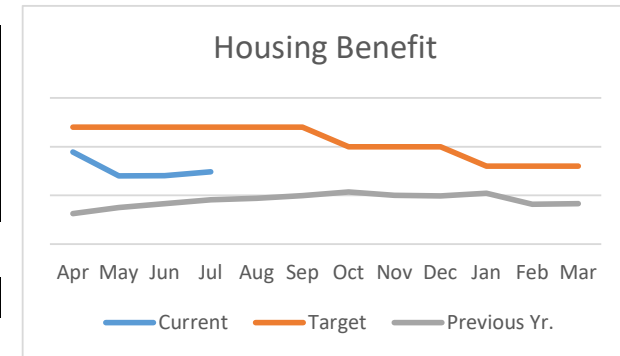
Narrative

This indicator has been met for this period and is expected to achieve year end target, subject to potential demand growth due to the economic impacts of the easing of Covid-19 funding schemes later in the year.

Housing Benefit

Days to process Housing Benefit					
	Q1	Jul-21	Q3	Q4	
2021/22	7.03	7.42	0.00	0.00	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2020/21	4.16	4.56	4.95	4.14	●

Year End Target	8	●
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23

Description

This indicator measures the average number of days to process Housing Benefit new claims and change of circumstances.

Narrative

This indicator has been met for this period and is expected to achieve year end target, subject to potential demand growth due to the economic impacts of the easing of Covid-19 funding schemes later in the year.

Fraud and Compliance

Following the transfer of Housing Benefit fraud to the DWP on the 1 September 2015, the team continue to be tasked, in accordance with the Business Case approved by Joint Committee, to identify and prevent fraud leading to an increase in Council Tax income in the following areas:

Local Council Tax Support, Single Person Discount, Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates.

The reviews of NFI SPD matches and newly awarded Single Person Discounts continue to provide very positive outcomes.

The team work closely with the East Suffolk Corporate Fraud Team and ensure the transfer of fraud referrals across the teams.

The team continue to seek opportunities to identify dwellings and businesses not registered or having had an undeclared change in use, leading to increased charges – including possible retrospective charges.

Work within the NFI SPD review process continues to provide a number of positive outcomes.

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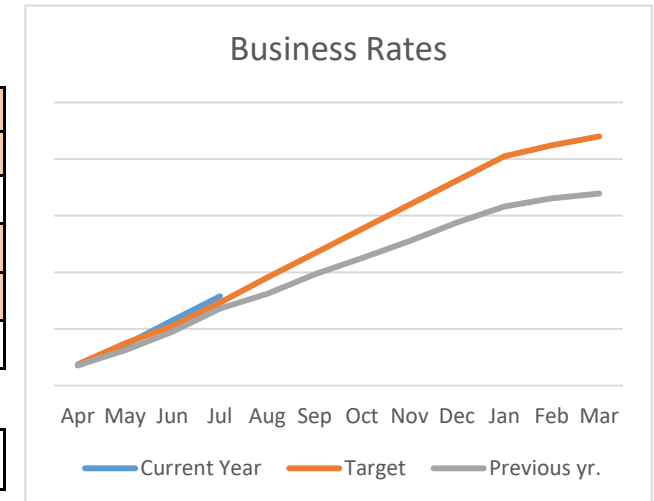
	Q1	Jul-21	Q3	Q4
Single Person Discount Fraud	£124,407	£176,010	£0	£0
Local Council Tax Support	£8,793	£13,717	£0	£0
Tenancy Fraud	£0	£0	£0	£0
Other (Council Tax and NDR)	£1,676	£3,040	£0	£0
Fraud Identified	£134,876	£192,767	£0	£0

Performance Information July 2021

Business Rates

Business Rates Collection					
	Q1	Jul-21	Q3	Q4	
2021/22	£ 5,750,467	£ 7,885,927	£ -	£ -	●
Target	£ 5,252,660	£ 7,349,233	£ 18,106,158	£ 21,998,313	
Refunds	£ 291,391	£ 402,730	£ -	£ -	
2020/21	£ 4,752,965	£ 6,799,531	£ 14,405,039	£ 16,956,825	●

Year End Target	£21,998,313	●
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Description

This shows the amount of money required to be collected within the financial year, payable to the NNDR Collection Fund against the actual collection.

Narrative

Collection is on target. The issue of bills for premises that were receiving Expanded Retail Relief has effected the pattern of collection with the net collectable debt increasing significantly in June due to the instalments commencing in July. This has been compounded by some companies declining the relief which again impacts on the net collectable debt and instalments are only now due.

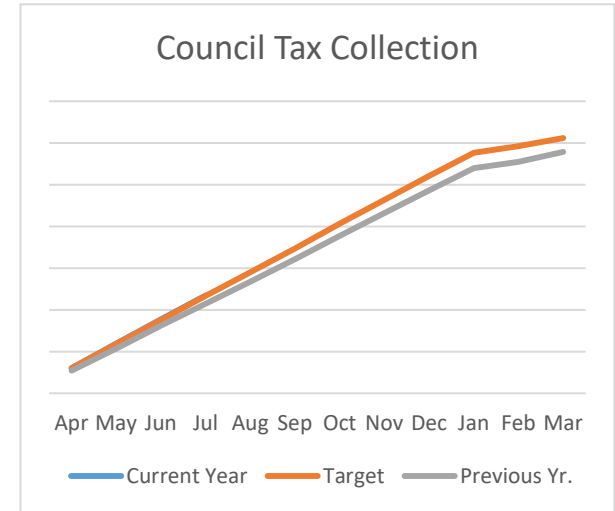
Further recovery action in 2021/22 has resulted in collection of £29,194.00.

Enforcement action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £14,801.76. Not including Direct Payments

Council Tax

Council Tax Collection					
	Q1	Jul-21	Q3	Q4	
2021/22	£ 17,701,900	£ 23,454,913	£ -	£ -	●
Target	£ 17,551,558	£ 23,351,957	£ 52,062,693	£ 61,172,317	
Refunds	£ 213,560	£ 300,755	£ -	£ -	
2020/21	£ 16,234,901	£ 21,477,928	£ 48,651,700	£ 57,863,955	●

Year End Target	£61,172,317	●
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26

Description

This shows the amount of money required to be collected within the financial year, payable to the Council Tax Collection Fund against the actual collection.

Narrative

Collection is on target for the current financial year. In the last financial year formal recovery proceedings were delayed and some customers made extended arrangements into this financial year. We will continue to monitor the effect this may have on current year collection.

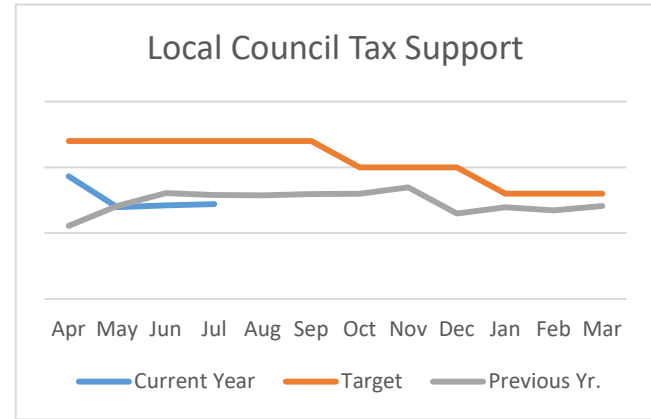
Further recovery action in 2021/22 has resulted in collection of £5,752.

Enforcement action in 2021/22 has resulted in collection of £207,242.27 Not including Direct Payments.

Charging Orders have been obtained to secure £383,743.21 debt.

Local Council Tax Reduction

Days to process Local Council Tax Support					
	Q1	Jul-21	Q3	Q4	
2021/22	7.11	7.21	0.00	0.00	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2020/21	8.03	7.90	6.49	7.06	●



27

Year End Target	8	●
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Description

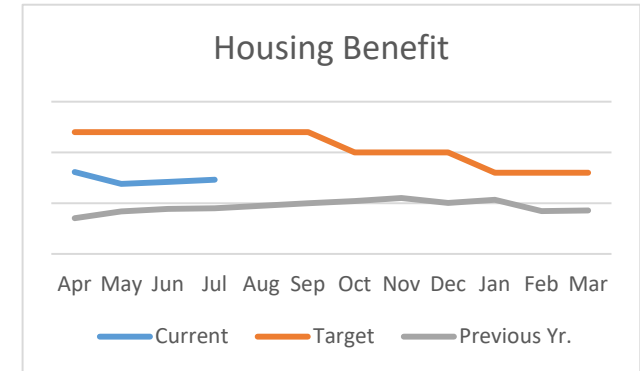
This indicator measures the average number of days to process Council Tax reduction new claims and change of circumstances.

Narrative

This indicator has been met for this period and is expected to achieve year end target, subject to potential demand growth due to the economic impacts of the easing of Covid-19 funding schemes later in the year.

Housing Benefit

Days to process Housing Benefit					
	Q1	Jul-21	Q3	Q4	
2021/22	7.09	7.32	0.00	0.00	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2020/21	4.43	4.50	5.01	4.28	●
Year End Target			8		●



28

Description
 This indicator measures the average number of days to process Housing Benefit new claims and change of circumstances.

Narrative
 This indicator has been met for this period and is expected to achieve year end target, subject to potential demand growth due to the economic impacts of the easing of Covid-19 funding schemes later in the year.

Fraud and Compliance

Fraud and Compliance

Following the transfer of Housing Benefit fraud to the DWP on the 1 September 2015, the team continue to be tasked, in accordance with the Business Case approved by Joint Committee, to identify and prevent fraud leading to an increase in Council Tax income in the following areas:

Local Council Tax Support, Single Person Discount, Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates.

The review of newly awarded Single Person Discounts continues to provide positive outcomes.

The team continue to seek opportunities to identify dwellings and businesses not registered or having had an undeclared change in use, leading to increased charges – including possible retrospective charges.

The team continue working with Cambridgeshire County in setting up the Fraud Hub in Cambridgeshire. This is an attempt to match data sets across County to increase Council Tax and Business Rate income. Ongoing discussions relating to the business case continue having ben delayed sue to Covid 19 activities. A presentation of the NFI Fraud Hub has recently taken place to assess the software requirement to data match. Once operating this will align the work of the fraud team across the partnership.

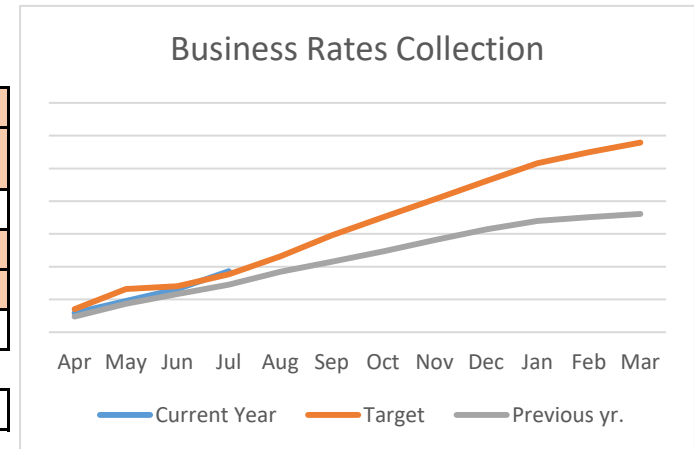
29

	Q1	Jul-21	Q3	Q4
Single Person Discount Fraud	£72,811	£82,651	£0	£0
Local Council Tax Support	£16,333	£16,333	£0	£0
Tenancy Fraud	£93,000	£93,000	£0	£0
Other (Council Tax and NDR)	£33,838	£47,397	£0	£0
Fraud Identified	£215,982	£239,381	£0	£0

Business Rates

Business Rates Collection						
	Q1	Jul-21	Q3	Q4		
2021/22	£ 13,192,098	£ 18,624,701	£ -	£ -	●	
Target	£ 14,065,688	£ 17,661,060	£ 46,077,732	£ 57,878,811		
Refunds	£ 460,862	£ 667,857	£ -	£ -		
2020/21	£ 11,674,180	£ 14,559,028	£ 31,404,393	£ 36,097,792	●	

Year End Target	57,878,811	●
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30

Description

This shows the amount of money required to be collected within the financial year, payable to the NNDR Collection Fund against the actual collection.

Narrative

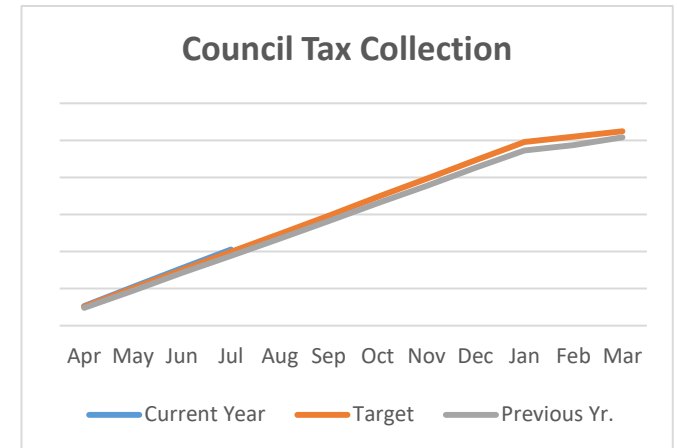
Collection is on target. The issue of bills for premises that were receiving Expanded Retail Relief has effected the pattern of collection with the net collectable debt increasing significantly in June due to the instalments commencing in July. This has been compounded by some companies declining the relief which again impacts on the net collectable debt and instalments are only now due.

Further recovery action in 2021/22 has resulted in collection of £42,994.49.

Enforcement action in 2021/22 has resulted in collection of £18,334.18. Not including Direct Payments.

Council Tax Collection					
	Q1	Jul-21	Q3	Q4	
2021/22	£ 31,052,369	£ 41,087,423	£ -	£ -	●
Target	£ 30,032,672	£ 39,829,556	£ 89,356,287	£ 104,909,024	
Refunds	£ 335,028	£ 450,948	£ -	£ -	
2020/21	£ 28,542,242	£ 37,722,961	£ 85,229,464	£ 101,634,429	●

Year End Target	104,909,024	●
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31

Description

This shows the amount of money required to be collected within the financial year, payable to the Council Tax Collection Fund against the actual collection.

Narrative

Collection is on target for the current financial year. In the last financial year formal recovery proceedings were delayed and some customers made extended arrangements into this financial year. We will continue to monitor the effect this may have on current year collection.

Further recovery action in 2021/22 has resulted in collection of £34,980.91.

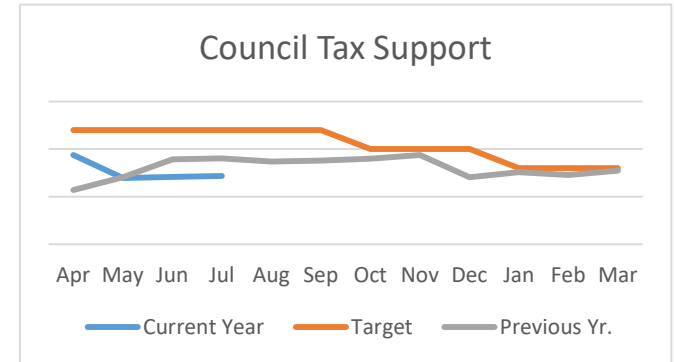
Enforcement action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £233,957.32. Not including Direct Payments

Charging Orders have been obtained to secure £519,436.79 debt.

Days to process Local Council Tax Support

	Q1	Jul-21	Q3	Q4	
2021/22	7.07	7.17	0.00	0.00	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2020/21	8.91	9.04	7.04	7.73	●

Year End Target	8	●
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32

Description

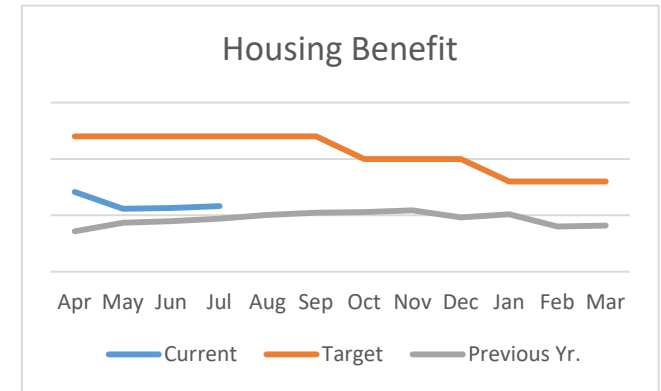
This indicator measures the average number of days to process Council Tax reduction new claims and change of circumstances.

Narrative

This indicator has been met for this period and is expected to achieve year end target, subject to potential demand growth due to the economic impacts of the easing of Covid-19 funding schemes later in the year.

Days to process Housing Benefit					
	Q1	Jul-21	Q3	Q4	
2021/22	5.66	5.82	0.00	0.00	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2020/21	4.47	4.70	4.82	4.10	●

Year End Target	8	●
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33

Description

This indicator measures the average number of days to process Housing Benefit new claims and change of circumstances.

Narrative

This indicator has been met for this period and is expected to achieve year end target, subject to potential demand growth due to the economic impacts of the easing of Covid-19 funding schemes later in the year.

Fraud and Compliance

Following the transfer of Housing Benefit fraud to the DWP on the 1 September 2015, the team continue to be tasked, in accordance with the Business Case approved by Joint Committee, to identify and prevent fraud leading to an increase in Council Tax income in the following areas:

Local Council Tax Support, Single Person Discount, Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates.

The team work closely with the Housing Option Team and also with Housing Associations to tackle Right to Buy and subletting abuse. The team continue to seek opportunities to identify dwellings and businesses not registered or having had an undeclared change in use, leading to increased charges – including possible retrospective charges. The team are also forging closer working relationships with a number of service areas in an attempt prevent and detect fraud and error. A closer working relationship with Planning Enforcement, Public Health and Housing and Economic Development has had a positive effect. The team continue to assist in post assurance of businesses entitled to the NNDR government business rates grant scheme. The team continue to work closely with the Internal Audit team to carry out the assurance work.

The NFI SPD review process and SPD New awards continue to provide positive outcomes.

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	Q1	Jul-21	Q3	Q4
Single Person Discount Fraud	£123,716	£159,074	£0	£0
Local Council Tax Support	£7,209	£9,105	£0	£0
Tenancy Fraud	£9,720	£9,720	£0	£0
Other (Council Tax and NDR)	£12,152	£12,152	£0	£0
Fraud Identified	£152,797	£190,051	£0	£0

Service Updates as at July 2021



Enforcement

Enforcement visits are continuing with all the necessary personal protective equipment and risk assessment in place. Collection has continued to rise back to near normal levels. We continue to try and engage with customers offering long term payment arrangements and assisting customers where possible.

Parking cases for West Suffolk and East Suffolk are coming through to Enforcement with positive results on collection.

This year we collected in July £383,262.49 compared to £227,543.66 at the same point last year.

Further Recovery

Our total collection so far this year is £383,698 which is £167,441 more than for the same point last year. We are not yet back to the same levels of collection we had in 2019, as it will take a while for momentum to build up and collection from the actions taken to be realised. The team are working towards it and seeing excellent results.

Non-Domestic Rates

Work is progressing to commence the Reviews of reductions; this has been delayed due to an issue with the e-forms test system which is currently not available to us to finalise the documentation.

Work volumes are stable, and progress has been made to reduce the aged processes so that a higher volume of work is completed within targeted deadlines.

Work is due to commence on the new QA procedures over the next month which will allow us to identify training needs and inconsistencies in processing.

Council Tax

Demand for council tax billing continues at very high levels due to Covid-19, in particular the high number of people moving to take advantage of the extended stamp duty holiday, this year we have seen a 60% increase in people moving. However, outstanding work continues to be below the peaks previously seen which is testament to our project to introduce the generic Council Tax Billing Officer role, which provides a resilient team who have been able to switch between billing and benefits to help cope with ever changing workloads and priorities during the pandemic, providing increased flexibility to the use of our resources, along with maximising automation functionality.

In the last financial year formal recovery proceedings were delayed and some customers made extended arrangements into this financial year. This may impact on current year collection, we will monitor the situation closely.

The amount of recovery work remains significant as we pick up the recovery that was delayed from last year. Call volumes in excess of 4000 per month illustrate the response and engagement from the public and how the team can negotiate identifying vulnerability and tailoring recovery solutions where appropriate.

Data files for all 5 Councils will be sent to Cabinet Office on 6th August for data matching with HMRC and DWP to allow us to pursue attachment of earnings and deductions of benefits where people have not provided information or entered into payment arrangements.

Courts continue to be virtual hearings, apart from Yarmouth Court. This is as long as there are no customers wishing to attend. Attendees have to book to attend the court due to restrictions. At point of contact we can usually deal with any issues, resulting in no need for court attendance.

This will save court officers many hours a month in travel and court delays.

Benefits

Both Council Tax Support and Benefits performance has achieved targets, despite the increased demand attributed to COVID-19 and the usual increased demand generated by issuing annual Council Tax bills and uprating notifications.

We continue to see increases in demand, in particular we are seeing increases in change of addresses as people take advantage of the extended stamp duty holiday and low interest rates. We continue to utilise generically trained staff to focus resource where it is most needed.

The Track & Trace Self Isolation payment scheme has been extended to 30th September with additional Government funding. The scheme has been extended to include provision for parents to apply for a payment when their school age children are required to self-isolate .

ARP Systems and Digital

Work is progressing with Capita to review their Digital product working with other LA's to provide feedback from a wider group of Capita users. We are working with a large Unitary Council where we are sharing our knowledge and experiences, this will be beneficial for ARP in the future.

Work volumes with both System admin and EDMS have been quite high, but through working with the project Manager we are making a strong plan of priorities so we can ensure that resources can meet expectations and demands.

Fraud and Compliance

With Covid 19 restrictions having been reduced the Fraud Team have again reviewed the work of the visiting officers, to comply with local authority guidance. The team are now visiting all domestic and business premises except for occupied domestic properties. The Visiting Officers are still being supplied with relevant Personal Protective Equipment for visits. Desk based Fraud and Compliance work continues as usual, with all the Fraud Team able to fully work from home.

There has been some recent progression with the Cambridgeshire Fraud Hub and continued discussion with East Camb's DC and Fenland DC for the business case to extend the Fraud and Compliance work for the two partners. If approved this would align the Fraud and Compliance work currently being carried out for other partners of the Anglia Revenues Partnership as indicated in the fraud savings on the quarterly performance report. This work has again consistently seen savings outweighing the costs of the work in the areas of Local Council Tax Reduction and Single Person Discounts particularly, over several years. Norfolk County Council and now Suffolk County Council have committed to continue providing funding until March 2022. Norfolk County Council have additionally funded one Council Tax compliance Officer for 2021/2022 to continue Single Person Discount reviews for Norwich City Council and any additional work identified through the Norfolk Fraud Hub.

We are still unable to interview customers under caution on a face-to-face basis and continue to interview customers by letter and a process and procedure has been set up to enable this. Sanctions and prosecutions continue to be conducted using this process. However, we are now looking to identify interview rooms to enable safe interviews to be conducted under the guidance of the Health and Safety Teams.

Joint working with the DWP is now part of further ongoing discussions we are now working with the Norwich DWP Fraud team on joint investigations and interviews are now likely to recommence in September 2021.

The Fraud and Compliance Team have yet again had an exceptional start to the new financial year in terms of Fraud identified within the partnership.

An ongoing project within the Visiting Team is Total Mobile and agile working electronic method of raising and conducting Council Tax inspections. This is now fully functional across the partnership and we are now looking to include Empty Business Rate Properties as part of the electronic notification in September 2021.

An electronic method of recording and monitoring new build residential properties is operating in East Suffolk only and is now being incrementally rolled out across the partnership with all system modules being aligned. This system is currently being implemented in the Breckland Council area.



Better Customer Journeys Programme

We continue to realise several projects which affect and improve customer experience, for example service response with automation and/or streamlined processes, making self-service the customer-preferred option or continuing to pressure suppliers to improve their product quality.

Council Tax change of address automation was launched with Fenland in July and will now be rolled out in Breckland, East Camb's, East Suffolk and West Suffolk in August. The new approach allows us to auto-index >90% of transactions which will help increase our speed of response. Additionally for Benefits and Council Tax Billing, we are improving NNDR eForms and Recovery interactions. The Telsolutions product is in place for our Enforcement Agency and is already generating returns in terms of successful contact; development for Recovery, Further Recovery and Council Tax Billing is ongoing.

On a council-specific basis, we're supporting Breckland's customer portal replacement project and their chatbot deployment. Along with the customer service group we are facilitating demonstrations, to begin evaluating the quality and potential of partners portal integration to revenues and benefits systems; we will use this to inform our product improvement conversations with Capita.

ANGLIA REVENUES PARTNERSHIP

Report of Adrian Mills – ARP Strategic Manager (Billing & Benefits)
To: ARP Joint Committee, 21st September 2021
Subject: Welfare Reform
Purpose: To provide an update on welfare reform

Recommendation(s):

- That the report is noted.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Welfare Reform was introduced by Government in 2012 as part of wider fiscal measures to reduce deficits, with the intention to encourage work whilst reducing welfare expenditure. This report contains the latest updates on welfare reform and builds on previous reports to Joint Committee.

2.0 Matters of interest

2.1 Universal Credit – situation to date. Update at para 2.1.9 to 2.1.12

2.1.1 Universal Support

2.1.2 The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) established Universal Support to help people to claim Universal Credit and budgeting support to help customers to manage their payments.

2.1.3 Since the introduction of Universal Credit, the DWP has funded Local Authorities to provide these services, who in turn have been free to do so either directly or through commissioning arrangements. The ARP partner Councils provided direct help to claim within their Customer Services teams, with all bar one of the Councils funding Citizen’s Advice to provide budgeting support.

2.1.4 In April 2019 changed their strategy, awarding a 12-month contract, subsequently extended to the 2021-2022 year, to Citizens Advice (CAB) to provide these services. CAB nationally have, through their various CAB networks throughout Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk, established the following arrangements locally:

- Advisors dial into a national call centre
- Web chat
- Face to face arrangements – some on an appointment basis, others on a drop in basis or a mixture of the two. Rural provision can be patchy

2.1.5 Concerns have been raised that CAB are only funded to help to the first payment. Given DWP’s processing figures show approximately 80% of claims are paid on time (at five weeks) and given that the Housing Element (for rent) is typically the cause of delay, concerns have been expressed that vulnerable people may be affected and at risk of falling into rent arrears and subsequent consequences. CAB have said they will continue to help such customers, drawing on their usual funding streams.

- 2.1.6** The partner Customer Services teams continue to help customers to claim, which may include signposting to CAB.
- 2.1.7** ARP continues to monitor the position and through meetings with the LGA and DWP, will continue to raise issues and concerns.
- 2.1.8** DWP are yet to publish a review of the CAB Help to Claim service but have confirmed the CAB arrangement will continue into the 2021-2022 year, with a review underway for provision from 2022.
- 2.1.9** DWP recently requested expressions of interest from public, private and voluntary sectors to deliver a digital and telephony help to claim service from April 2022, stating DWP will take responsibility for face to face assistance. An expression of interest was made but to date a response has not been forthcoming.
- 2.1.10** The Customer Services Team, comprising of partner Heads of Customer Service, support the ARP view that the best fit for our residents would be for DWP to take full responsibility for helping customers to claim UC, a benefit they administer. To provide a seamless service DWP could utilise their existing digital and telephony capability to provide assistance to supplement their face to face Job Centre capability.
- 2.1.11** At Joint Committee 22nd June 2021 Members requested a briefing note to assist with any discussions with their MPs, subsequently issued.
- 2.1.12** To date there has not been any further communication or announcements by DWP.

2.1.13 Summary of the current position on the expansion of Universal Credit

- Due to redeploying staff to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic, DWP pulled the Harrogate pilot of managed migration of existing cases in Spring 2020. DWP now plan to recommence the pilot this year and report to Parliament with the aim of completing migration by 2024. DWP have not released any further detail or indicative timetable at this stage.
- DWP are launching a UC awareness campaign to encourage voluntary migration as numbers are very low and not meeting UC business case volumes or costings. Difficulty presents that voluntary customers will not receive the transitional protection afforded to managed customers – DWP itself estimates 30-50% will be worse off at the point of transfer, with Ministers advocating caution when advising customers.
- Pensioner Housing Benefit to continue until at least 2025
- As a response to the Covid-19 pandemic, Universal Credit rates were temporarily increased by £20 per week for the 2020-2021 year and extended in the recent budget to 30th September 2021, now confirmed to end. It should be noted all the partner Local Council Tax Support schemes provide for customers to receive the full benefit of that uplift.

2.2 At a national level the following concerns have been raised:

- How DWP will monitor and report Citizen's Advice performance delivering Universal Support
- The lack of Managed Migration detailed plans and schedule
- Failure to take advantage of existing data to prepopulate UC systems with legacy systems data – all existing customers including Housing Benefit will be expected to make a new claim. DWP say they cannot 'lift and shift' existing known data held on their systems to the UC system. I have challenged that as a missed opportunity to smooth the customer migration journey.
- Concerns the Managed Migration process will leave customers without benefit during the transfer - DWP adopting a 'who knows me approach'
- The five weeks wait for UC payments – rent element often lags behind
- Alternative Payment Arrangements and data share for Private Landlords
- Housing Benefit Debt

- LA funding
- Management Information including LA access to UC Information

2.3 Discretionary Housing Payment – no new matters arising

2.3.1 Discretionary Housing Payment grant is funded by DWP, designed to help customers remain in their homes or to move to affordable and sustainable accommodation. For the 2020-2021 year DWP increased funding to offset the impact of private sector rents increasing above the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates used to calculate Housing Benefit.

2.3.2 However, funding for 2021-2022 has returned to 2019-2020 levels, despite concerns the pandemic will increase demand throughout this year. We are in close conversations with individual Housing teams to plan, profile and monitor demand and expenditure to meet requirements to ensure full spend, but not to exceed funding levels, given a budget does not exist to top up.

2.4 Benefit Cap – no new matters arising

2.4.1 DWP introduced the reduced Benefit Cap on the 7th November 2016; the maximum family income before the Benefit Cap applies reduced from £26,000 to £20,000 (£13,400 for single adults with no children).

2.4.2 The Benefit Service continues to work with colleagues in Customer Service and Housing Options teams to seek to avoid homelessness and the cost of temporary housing.

2.5 Social rented sector rent restrictions – no new matters arising

2.5.1 In August 2020 Government responded to consultation on funding for supported housing, dropping proposals to move away from a subsidised demand led model to a grant model. For the foreseeable future, supported accommodation, including hostel tenancies, will remain in Housing Benefit and will not move to Universal Credit.

3.0 Welfare Benefit Uprating April 2021 – no new matters arising

3.1 Government ended the four year Benefit uprating freeze in 2020. From April 2021 all Benefits increased by the September 2020 CPI inflation measure which is 0.5% with the State Pension rising by 2.5% due to the 'Triple Lock' (lower of CPI, average earnings or 2.5%).

4.0 Options

4.1 The report is for information purposes

5.0 Reasons for recommendations

5.1 The report is for information only

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Risk

The report is for information only

6.2 Financial

The report is for information only

6.3 Legal

The report is for information only

6.4 Equality and Diversity

Not applicable.

Background papers: - None

Lead Contact Officer

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BRECKLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

Report of: Alison Chubbock, Assistant Director Finance

To: ARP Joint Committee, 21 September 2021

Author: Alison Chubbock, Assistant Director Finance

Subject: ARP Forecast Financial Performance

Purpose: To provide information on the forecast full year financial position against budget for the ARP

Recommendation(s):

- 1) That the report and appendix be noted

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 Each of the partner Councils provides forecast full year financial information against budget for the ARP. The information is collated to provide an overall financial performance report, to provide information to Joint Committee on the progress against budget. This report is based on information as of 31 July 2021 and all costs are included and shared based on the Partnership agreement.

1.2 The forecast at this stage of the year shows a small underspend against budget of £55k for the whole of the ARP and this is shown further in Appendix A along with details of the variances. The forecast presented in this report assumes that the level of enforcement income meets budgeted levels which is based on indications to date.

1.3 Appendix A also provides details on the remaining transformation funding which was set aside in previous years from below budget spend and grant funding. £96k is earmarked for projects in progress this year and there is a further £133k available for future transformation projects.

The appendix also provides detail on the values held and earmarked in the ICT reserve, which was introduced to smooth the financial effects of major ICT spend.

1.4 The table below shows the share of the forecast outturn for each partner based on the JC agreement.

	Forecast Out-turn
Breckland	(£11,959)
East Cambs	(£4,883)
East Suffolk	(£11,048)
Fenland	(£11,355)
West Suffolk	(£15,986)
TOTAL	(£55,231)

2.0 OPTIONS

2.1 That the report and appendices are noted.

3.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

3.1 To provide Members information on the financial position against budget for the whole of the ARP.

4.0 EXPECTED BENEFITS

4.1 To provide Members information on the financial position against budget for the whole of the ARP.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

In preparing this report, the report author has considered the likely implications of the decision - particularly in terms of Carbon Footprint / Environmental Issues; Constitutional & Legal; Contracts; Corporate Priorities; Crime & Disorder; Equality & Diversity/Human Rights; Financial; Health & Wellbeing; Reputation; Risk Management; Safeguarding; Staffing; Stakeholders/Consultation/Timescales; Transformation Programme; Other. Where the report author considers that there may be implications under one or more of these headings, these are identified below.

5.2 Financial

5.2.1 This report is financial in nature and financial information is included within the report and appendices.

5.2 Stakeholders / Consultation / Timescales

5.12.1 Accountants at the partner Councils have been consulted on their financial forecasts.

6.0 WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED

6.1 N/A

7.0 ACRONYMS

7.1 ARP – Anglia Revenues Partnership

7.2 JC – Joint Committee

Background papers:- [See The Committee Report Guide for guidance on how to complete this section](#)

Lead Contact Officer

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Key Decision: No

Exempt Decision: No

This report refers to a Mandatory & Discretionary Services

Appendices attached to this report:

Appendix A Financial performance report

Anglia Revenues Partnership Joint Committee

Forecast Full Year Financial Performance as at 31/07/2021

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Description	Approved Budget 2021/22 £	Forecast Actuals 2021/22 £	Forecast Variance Over/(Under) £	Variance %	Notes
Employee Related Costs	9,785,797	9,719,299	(66,498)	(0.68)	1
Premises Related Costs	275,886	269,600	(6,286)	(2.28)	
Transport Related Costs	103,805	103,670	(135)	(0.13)	
Supplies & Services	1,774,211	1,789,023	14,812	0.83	
Support Services	495,228	486,508	(8,720)	(1.76)	
Income	(2,777,046)	(2,765,450)	11,596	(0.42)	
TOTAL PARTNERSHIP COSTS	9,657,881	9,602,650	(55,231)	(0.57)	2

Variance Notes

1. The employee under spend is due to senior managers vacancies and other staff vacancies year to date.
2. The overall variance of (£55k) is mainly due to employees as noted above. No additional lost sales fees and charges income is forecast at this stage for Enforcement work as at this point we assume bailiff income will be on target but will know more by the end of Q2, as current indications are that pre-covid work, Council Tax and NNDR, is on track and we have received over 2,500 parking cases at the end of July.

Transformation funding - committed expenditure as follows;

Description	Approved Budget	Forecast Actuals	Forecast Actuals
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
	£	£	£
Already committed from grant funding received in previous years			
Mitel Join Up	20,000	0	0
Fines officer	6,500	0	0
Self isolation	39,148	0	0
IRRV training	5,985	0	0
Compliance officer for Norwich City work	25,000	0	0
Total	96,633	0	0
Unallocated	133,009	0	0
Grand Total	229,642	0	0

The committed transformation funding is £96,633. It is expected that the budget will be spent by the end of the year. If all of the identified expenditure goes through in 2021/22 there will be £133k remaining for future projects, however, it is likely that this will be spent on projects this year.

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ICT Reserve	Approved Budget	Approved Budget	Approved Budget
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
	£	£	£
Opening Balance	0	22,500	14,500
Partnership contribution	72,500	72,500	72,500
Earmarked - ICT refresh replacements	(50,000)	(80,500)	(81,318)
	22,500	14,500	5,682