

ANGLIA REVENUES PARTNERSHIP

Report of Paul Corney - Head of ARP

To: ARP Joint Committee, June 2019

Subject: The Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP) Service Delivery Plan and risk register.

Purpose: To provide an update on the Service Delivery Plan and Risk Register at Appendix A.

Recommendation(s):

- That the progress in respect of the December 2018 Service Delivery Plan is noted.
- That the ARP Joint Committee Approve the revised Service Delivery Plan and risk register at Appendix A

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 In accordance with the ARP agreement a revised Service Delivery Plan is agreed by the Joint Committee by the end of December each year and the risk register is reviewed 6 monthly.
- 1.1.2 A Service Delivery Plan was agreed in December 2018 and information below details progress against this plan. In addition to service aims and objectives the plan includes a risk assessment and detail of the major projects that ARP will implement in the next year.

1.2 December 2018 plan update

- 1.2.1 The ARP has seen significant success in the last year and we have achieved the following;
- Housing Benefit new claims and changes exceeded targets
 - All Councils have successfully moved to Universal Credit Full Service
 - All customer teams are able to use customer contact software to sign customers up to e-services upon contact.
 - The further recovery work jointly funded by County Councils secured recovery of over £1.1 Million last year
 - The Fraud teams work also jointly funded by the County Councils identified over £2.75 Million in fraud and error.
 - The Enforcement Agency had a surplus of over £720k whilst providing a more sympathetic service to debtors
 - The merge of databases for East Suffolk (previously Waveney and Suffolk Coastal) and West Suffolk (previously St. Edmundsbury and Forest Heath) has been completed for all revenues and benefits systems.

Some other achievements are detailed below:

- 1.2.2 On the 1st April 2017 the shared management arrangement with Norwich City commenced and has been very successful to date. Partnership arrangements have been extended to include the provision of fraud services for Norwich (jointly funded by

Norfolk County Council) and from the 1st July 2019 their enforcement work will also be dealt with by the ARP.

- 1.2.3 The website redesign has been completed for Council tax and Business Rates and Benefits transactional pages have gone live. The redesign uses UX (user experience) methodologies from the interaction lab of the City of London University. The amount of traffic on the site has risen significantly.
- 1.2.4 The Digital work stream has progressed with the development of online forms that integrate with the Capita system. Robotics/automation software is also being further developed to provide automation of the assessment process in selected cases for benefits and Council Tax forms. The benefits from these purchases will be seen from 2019/20 onwards.
- 1.2.5 A number of letters, bills and reminders have been redesigned using nudge techniques to deliver messages that will emphasise key data and encourage customers to respond to the information in a manner that will resolve any issues.
- 1.2.6 The Service Delivery Plan sought to deliver annual efficiencies to the partner councils of £531k in 2017/18 increasing to over £1 million which has been achieved. The target was set on the basis of assessed loss of grants from the DWP. It should be noted that all partner councils budgets for 2019/20 are less than the budgets they had on entering the partnership (Breckland and Forest Heath joined in 2003).

1.3 Service Delivery Plan and Risk Register

- 1.3.1 The service Delivery Plan (Appendix A) details the high level actions that the service must implement to ensure that the varied demands on the service are met. The plan has 3 areas:
 - Service plan – business as usual and innovative activities
 - Projects
 - Risk matrix

There will be an amount of overlap between these areas but the intention of separating them out in this way is to provide clarity over the high level work programmes for ARP.

- 1.3.2 The Joint Committee reconsidered the strategic direction of the ARP going forward and the Service Delivery Plan seeks to detail actions to achieve the visioning detailed in the report to members in September 2017.
- 1.3.3 The strategic priorities are:
 - Not to lose focus on its core business
 - To endeavour to influence DWP and other Government Departments.
 - To continue to promote specialist services
 - To develop its existing offer
- 1.3.4 Norwich have delegated their enforcement work to Breckland Council who will be passing this work to the ARP Enforcement Agency from July 2019. Other Councils are interested in delegating services to partner Councils leading to ARP collecting the debts which will grow the resilience of the Enforcement team.
- 1.3.5 The infrastructure to be able to increase on-line transactions has been put in place and software to enable automation of assessment processes has been installed. In 2018/19 and 2019/20 the digital transformation team (the customer service lead officers from each Council and the ARP strategic team) will continue to drive cultural change to enable officers to assist customers to learn to use the on-line services to reduce future footfall and telephone calls.

- 1.3.6 The ARP strategic team will continue to influence national initiatives such as Universal Credit and to influence system design to improve performance and generate efficiencies where possible.
- 1.3.7 Welfare reform is still high on the Governments agenda which will lead to fundamental changes in our service provision and so the plan includes actions to understand the impact on the partner councils of the changes, as information becomes available, there are also actions concerning the monitoring of the financial impact of the changes we have already seen.
- 1.3.8 The risk surrounding income from Business Rates remains red at this time because there is still risk in relation to subsequent appeals that may be received and reduce rates payable
- 1.3.9 The register also continues to highlight the need to monitor the impact of Universal Credit on customers and grant income. We continue to influence changes in delivery through representation on DWP steering groups.
- 1.3.10 The risk relating to Housing Benefit subsidy has been reduced, as discussed with members, because the hard work of the teams in managing the risk means that no loss of subsidy has been incurred for a number of years.
- 1.3.11 The merge of databases for East and West Suffolk has been successfully implemented and so the risk has been removed from the risk register.

2. Options

- 1. To suggest changes and additions to the Service Delivery Plan and Risk Register.
- 2. To approve the Service Delivery Plan and Risk Register.

3. Reasons for recommendations

A Service Delivery Plan and Risk Register are requirements of the ARP agreement and are needed to agree the short to medium term priorities of the ARP in delivering services as effectively, efficiently and economically as possible and to identify the risks associated with the services.

4. IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Risk

If a Service Delivery Plan is not agreed then the direction and priorities of service delivery can lose focus. The Plan allows members to monitor and direct service provision. The identification and mitigation of risk is necessary to ensure that Councils minimise the impact of risk on customers and the partner councils.

4.2 Financial

The Service Delivery plan requires the ARP officers to monitor and report on financial matters of relevance to the Section 151 officers of the ARP.

4.3 Legal

The ARP agreement requires a Service Delivery Plan to be agreed before the end of December each year.

4.4 Equality and Diversity

Not applicable.

Background papers:- None

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Appendices attached to this report:

Appendix A – Service Delivery Plan December 2018