

**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, 17 September 2019 at 11.00 am in the**  
**Level 5 Meeting Room, Breckland House, St Nicholas Street, Thetford**  
**IP24 1BT**

**PRESENT**

Mrs S. Broughton (Chairman)      Mr D Ambrose Smith  
Mr J.P. Cowen (Vice-Chairman)      Mr M. Cook

**In Attendance**

Peter Catchpole	- Corporate Director and Chief Finance Officer (S151) (Fenland)
Nick Khan	- Strategic Director (East Suffolk)
Ian Smith	- Principal Accountant (East Cambs)
Jo Andrews	- Strategic Manager (Revenues)
Alison Chubbock	- Chief Accountant (Deputy Section 151 Officer) (Breckland)
Paul Corney	- Head of ARP
Rachael Mann	- Assistant Director (Resources & Performance) (West Suffolk)
Adrian Mills	- Strategic Manager (Benefits) ARP
Stuart Philpot	- Strategic Manager (Support Services) ARP
Julie Britton	- Democratic Services Officer

**Quoracy of Meeting**

The meeting was inquorate; therefore, no decisions could be made and no votes could be cast.

Written notes were taken.

**23/19 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 1)**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2019 could not be confirmed due to the meeting being inquorate.

**24/19 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 2)**

Apologies for absence had been received by Cllr French, Fenland District Council and her substitutes.

**25/19 URGENT BUSINESS (AGENDA ITEM 3)**

None.

**26/19 DECLARATIONS (AGENDA ITEM 4)**

None declared.

**Action By**

**27/19 GOVERNANCE AND REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS RELATING TO INTERNAL AUDIT (AGENDA ITEM 5)**

Due to the absence of Siobhan Martin, Head of Internal Audit for East Suffolk Council, this agenda item was deferred until the December meeting. A written report was requested.

**Action By**

Siobhan  
Martin

**28/19 JOINT COMMITTEE ARP BROCHURE (AGENDA ITEM 6)**

The Operational Improvement Board of the Anglia Revenues Partnership had asked the Senior Management Team to produce a brochure to outline the work carried out by the Partnership.

It was noted that the brochure would be mainly an internal document and would be used for:

- Members - New ARP Joint Committee members could receive a copy of the brochure as part of their induction;
- Members at each partner Council for awareness of how the Revenues and Benefits service was delivered by the ARP for their own authority;
- Partner Authority staff who either worked as part of the ARP or other services within partner authorities for staff awareness of how the Revenues and Benefits service was delivered by the ARP;
- Included within material for ongoing recruitment; and
- External Councils' awareness of the successful services available from the ARP, for example The Anglia Revenues Partnership Enforcement Team.

Cllr Ambrose-Smith was relieved to hear that this brochure was not going to be used as a sales brochure. He asked how many copies would be printed. Members were informed that it would be mainly electronic and therefore only a few copies would be printed. The Chair, Cllr Broughton, felt that it would be useful to send the brochure to all Councils in the District. It was noted that the brochure would have to be amended slightly if it was going to be used to attract more trade. The Vice-Chairman was pleased to see that it had been designed in a digital format as it read very well on an iPad.

It was agreed that the brochure would be brought to the ARP Joint Committee every six months.

It was further agreed that a foreword from the Chair of the ARP Joint Committee would be produced and added to the brochure. Wording for this foreword would need to be agreed. *The Chair and each Member to provide their photograph to go into the brochure.*

A number of typographical errors were highlighted.

The recommendations were noted.

**29/19 PERFORMANCE REPORT AND SERVICE UPDATES - JULY 2019 (AGENDA ITEM 7)**

The Strategic Manager (Support Services) ARP presented the performance reports and Service updates to Members.

The amount collected for all partner Councils combined was highlighted.

Stuart  
Philpot

**Action By**

The Council tax collection target for Breckland Council was behind target due to the first summonses for non-payments being delayed by a month by the Court and an increase in the amount of pre-payments for the current financial year.

Under local Council tax reduction, whilst this indicator had been exceeded, it was noted that Breckland Council, East Cambridgeshire District Council and Fenland District Council had actually overachieved due to the downtime associated with the merger of East and West Suffolk systems and the re-focusing on resources to the other partners.

The Service updates as at July 2019 were highlighted and the elements in relation to the 'Better Customer Journeys Programme' was explained. The Chair pointed out that improvements for the customer were still required as she was still receiving many emails from the public about the E.forms being too complicated to complete and felt that these on-line forms should be looked at again. It was agreed that this matter would be brought to the next meeting in December 2019.

**Stuart  
Philpot**

The Head of ARP stated that stories of customer experiences of completing on-line forms etc was included as part of the better customer journey work. The Strategic Manager (Support Services) ARP advised that by following customer journeys on the website from start to finish there would most probably be recommendations stemming from that. The Chair still believed that the process was too complicated and looked forward to seeing any progress made.

The final element of the service update was in respect of the external mailing contractor. The contract had been extended for another 3 years with an option/ a get out clause, to extend or not for a further 2 years.

The performance reports and service updates were otherwise noted.

**30/19 ARP FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE (AGENDA ITEM 8)**

The Chief Accountant (BDC) presented the update on the budget performance based on information as at 31 July 2019. The latest forecast showed a small overspend against budget of £19k.

The risks at section 1.2 of the report were highlighted. The appendix to the report provided more detail and highlighted the level of Reserves held.

The Chair asked why there was so much of a delay with the enforcement cases. The Strategic Manager for Revenues (ARP) explained that Norwich City Council had referred a number of cases and an increase was expected in November 2019. The Head of ARP pointed out that although he had no concerns due to the value of income expected - the issue would be closely monitored. The Chair asked if any further enforcement work would be sought in addition to Norwich City Council. Members were informed that ARP would eventually start to receive a regular stream of work from the City Council and the reason for the delay had been due to lack of resource at the City Council. The Vice-Chairman had concerns in respect of the delays and asked about the legal agreement. He also wanted to know how the staff would cope once the work started to come through. The Strategic Manager for Revenues (ARP) said that staff were working on getting all other cases up to date in

**Action By**

preparation for the enforcement cases submitted by Norwich City Council.

In response to a concern, it was noted that Norwich City Council had ended its contract with other enforcement/bailiff providers and delegated responsibility for this function to the ARP.

The Chief Accountant (BDC) pointed out that it also benefited Norwich sending their cases through to the ARP.

Councillor Ambrose-Smith asked for this matter to be brought back to the December meeting for an update.

The report was otherwise noted.

**Alison  
Chubbock/  
Paul  
Corney/Jo  
Andrews**

**31/19 WELFARE REFORM UPDATE (STANDING ITEM) (AGENDA ITEM 9)**

The Strategic Manager for Benefits (ARP) presented the welfare reform report and drew Members attention to new matters arising at section 2.2 of the report in respect of Universal Credit and the migration trial at Harrogate Jobcentre.

It was advised that the results of the trial would go back to Parliament in due course.

ARP was actively working with those involved since the new legislation for Universal Credit was introduced on 15 May 2019 for mixed age couples. The Chair asked if this could lead to more fraudulent cases. Members were informed that DWP data sharing should reduce that risk.

Councillor Ambrose-Smith pointed out that CAB customers were being directed back to East Cambridgeshire District Council for advice. The Strategic Manager for Benefits (ARP) advised that this had been raised with the Partnership Manager and was being monitored but on a local level such matters needed to be raised with the CAB Manager.

The Vice-Chairman knew that filling in any form at a CAB office could take up to 2 hours and staff were not being properly remunerated for the increase in workload. He also felt that CABs were not set up to deal with such matters and he did not believe that this problem would go away. The Strategic Manager for Benefits (ARP) shared the Vice-Chairman's concerns but pointed out that local CAB bureaux were having on-going conversations with national CAB concerning their funding share for delivering the service.

It was noted that a six month review would be taking place and as the CAB only had a one year contract there was uncertainty as to what was going to happen next.

The report was otherwise noted.

**32/19 REVIEW OF THE ANGLIA REVENUES PARTNERSHIP CONSTITUTION (AGENDA ITEM 10)**

As the meeting was inquorate the recommendations could not be approved; therefore, the report would be deferred until the next meeting on 10 December 2019. If approved the Agreement would have to be endorsed by all partner Councils.

	<b><u>Action By</u></b>
<p>Discussions still took place particularly on the subject of quoracy and it was suggested that the quorum be changed from 5 to 4 Joint Committee Members with a discretionary provision included for the Chair to revert to 5 Joint Committee Members for a decision where it was considered appropriate (taking into account the views of the Joint Committee Members).</p>	<b>Rachael Mann</b>
<p><b>33/19 <u>FORTHCOMING ISSUES (STANDING ITEM) (AGENDA ITEM 11)</u></b></p>	
<p>None.</p>	
<p><b>34/19 <u>NEXT MEETING AND PROVISIONAL MEETINGS FOR 2020/2021 (AGENDA ITEM 12)</u></b></p>	
<p>The date of the next meeting on Tuesday, 10 December 2019 was noted.</p>	
<p>It was agreed that all future meetings would commence at 11am.</p>	
<p>The 2020/2021 meetings dates were discussed and it was agreed that the 16 June 2020 meeting would be changed to enable the meeting to be quorate.</p>	
<p>All other dates were noted and agreed.</p>	
<p>It was further agreed that paper copies of the agenda would be sent to Councillors Broughton, Ambrose-Smith, Cook and French.</p>	<b>All to Note</b>

The meeting closed at 12.15 pm

CHAIRMAN