



Joint Committee Performance report

July 2020



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All Partner Councils Combined



Business Rates Collection					
	Q1	Jul-20	Q3	Q4	
2020/21	£ 40,382,156	£ 52,622,012	£ -	£ -	●
Target	£ 40,752,304	£ 53,850,381	£ 127,690,735	£ 157,670,850	●
2019/20	£ 68,526,436	£ 89,400,479	£ 201,591,204	£ 243,658,978	●
			Year End Target	£157,670,850	●

Council Tax Collection					
	Q1	Jul-20	Q3	Q4	
2020/21	£127,454,324	£168,298,594	£0	£0	●
Target	£131,101,223	£174,174,510	£386,585,468	£454,258,929	●
2019/20	£125,766,695	£167,135,544	£370,954,312	£439,901,785	●
			Year End Target	£454,258,929	●

Number of Electronic Forms Received					
	Q1	Jul-20	Q3	Q4	
2020/21	12,089	15,734	0	0	●
2019/20	9,375	12,935	28,498	36,405	●
			Year End Target	36405	●

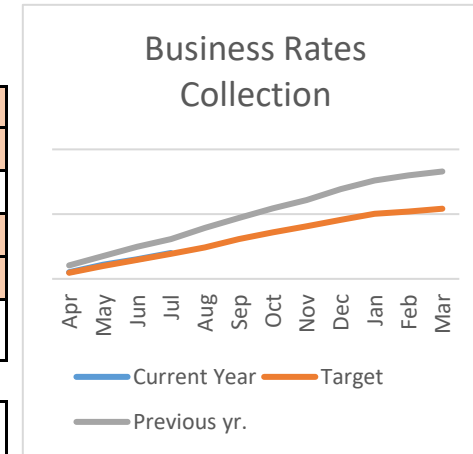
Fraud and Compliance	Q1	Jul-20	Q3	Q4	Yr Target
Single Person Discount Fraud	£529,263	£751,440	£0	£0	£500,000
Local Council Tax Support	£6,050	£19,478	£0	£0	£150,000
Tenancy Fraud	£6,480	£9,720	£0	£0	£400,000
Other (Council Tax and NDR)	£113,556	£186,624	£0	£0	£250,000
Fraud Identified	£655,349	£967,262	£0	£0	£1,300,000

Performance Information July 2020

Business Rates

Business Rates Collection					
	Q1	Jul-20	Q3	Q4	
2020/21	£ 6,046,513	£ 7,995,602	£ -	£ -	●
Target	£ 5,828,246	£ 7,775,438	£ 18,214,406	£ 21,669,107	
Refunds	£ 403,258	£ 600,171	£ -	£ -	
2019/20	£ 9,936,479	£ 12,271,820	£ 27,763,428	£ 33,171,404	●

Year End Target	£ 21,669,107	●
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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.

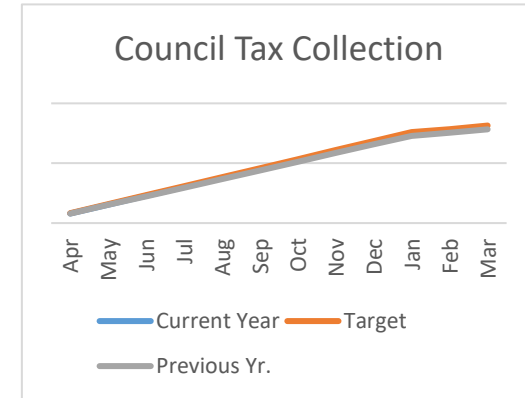
Narrative

Collection is on target for the current financial year. Targets have been amended to reflect the grants which will be received this year in respect of the rate reliefs funded by Government.

Further recovery action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £800. Enforcement action in 2021/21 has resulted in collection of £11,745.

Council Tax

Council Tax Collection						
	Q1	Jul-20	Q3	Q4		
2020/21	£ 22,830,485	£ 30,112,686	£ -	£ -		●
Target	£ 23,306,834	£ 30,834,102	£ 68,527,467	£ 81,463,941		
Refunds	£ 204,527	£ 296,059	£ -	£ -		
2019/20	£ 22,364,957	£ 29,591,068	£ 65,767,484	£ 78,299,417		●



Year End Target	£81,463,941	●
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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 behind target by £721,415. The Government is funding a hardship scheme which has provided up to £150 to each LCTRS recipient of working age. Targets have been adjusted to reflect these payments. Whilst Covid has affected some customers ability to pay, we haven't been able to take our normal action to recover outstanding amounts through the Magistrates Court. Also, the amount of Council Tax support awarded has increased during the first part of this financial year, reducing the amount to be collected.

Further recovery action in 20/21 has resulted in collection of £15,080. Enforcement action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £134,060.

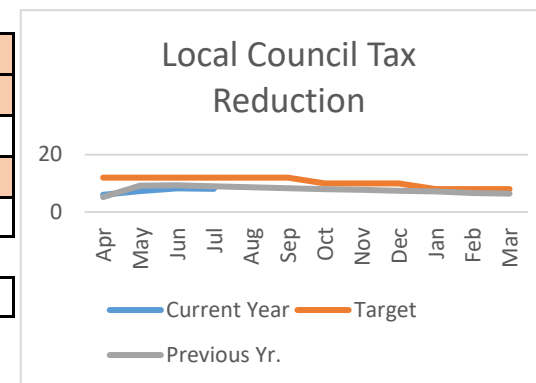
Charging Orders have been obtained to secure £368,754 debt.

Local Council Tax Reduction

Days to process Local Council Tax Support

	Q1	Jul-20	Q3	Q4	
2020/21	8.26	8.13	0.00	0.00	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	9.34	8.99	7.46	6.43	●

Year End Target	8	●
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Description

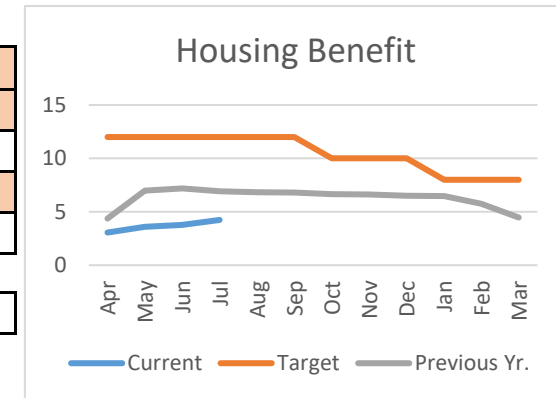
This indicator measures the average year to date number of days to process Council Tax reduction new claims and change of circumstances.

Narrative

This indicator is currently being met and is expected to achieve target at the end of the year, although an economic downturn could increase demand thereby impacting processing performance.

Housing Benefit

Days to process Housing Benefit					
	Q1	Jul-20	Q3	Q4	
2020/21	3.77	4.24	0.00	0.00	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	7.19	6.92	6.50	4.47	●
Year End Target		8		●	



Description

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

Narrative

This indicator is currently being met and is expected to achieve target at the end of the year, although an economic downturn could increase demand thereby impacting processing performance.

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 are working with Housing Option Teams and also with Housing Associations to tackle Right to buy and subletting abuse where investigation agreements are in place. 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.

Recent involvement includes a closer working relationship with both Planning Enforcement and Economic Development.

In a broader sense the team are also working with County in setting up 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 the Premium Single Person Discount Reviews.

The team are also working on a trial with NFI relating to Council Tax voids and all ARP partners are subscribing to the NFI Mortality Data set matches.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Single Person Discount Fraud	£117,886	£184,297	£0	£0
Local Council Tax Support	£1,346	£5,246	£0	£0
Tenancy Fraud	£0	£0	£0	£0
Other (Council Tax and NDR)	£53,563	£65,107	£0	£0
Fraud Identified	£172,794	£254,650	£0	£0



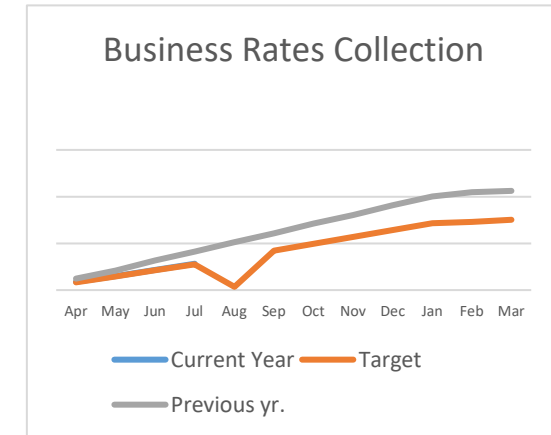
Performance Information July 2020



Business Rates

Business Rates Collection						
	Q1	Jul-20	Q3	Q4		
2020/21	£ 4,321,819	£ 5,637,270	£ -	£ -		●
Target	£ 4,237,694	£ 5,522,854	£ 12,817,527	£ 15,047,841		
Refunds	£ 219,614	£ 301,339	£ -	£ -		
2019/20	£ 6,372,977	£ 8,241,872	£ 18,185,963	£ 20,979,468		●

Full Year Target	£15,047,841	●
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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 for the current financial year. Targets have been amended to reflect the grants which will be received this year in respect of the rate reliefs funded by Government.

There have been claims by NHS Trusts for charitable rate relief which have been subject to a High Court appeal. If successful this could result in a backdated refund of £553K. The High Court have rejected the claim that the NHS Trusts are charities, however the NHS trusts are now appealing this decision.

Further recovery action in 2020/21 has not resulted in any collection. Enforcement action in 20/21 has resulted in collection of £5,580.

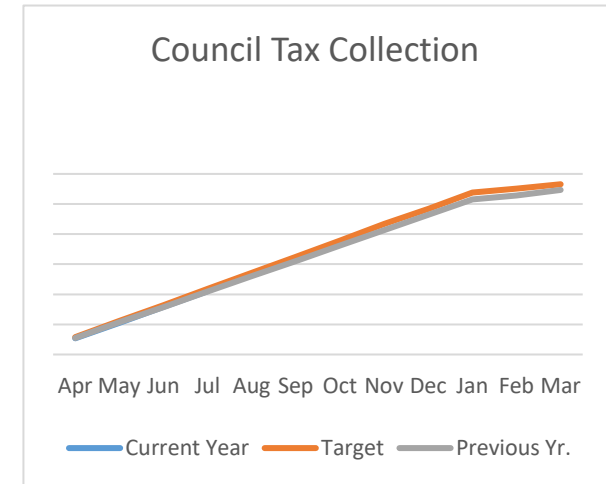


Council Tax



Council Tax Collection					
	Q1	Jul-20	Q3	Q4	
2020/21	£ 15,859,812	£ 21,045,367	£ -	£ -	●
Target	£ 16,420,947	£ 21,851,229	£ 48,431,329	£ 56,565,439	
Refunds	£ 149,975	£ 227,388	£ -	£ -	
2019/20	£ 15,730,723	£ 20,933,850	£ 46,402,469	£ 52,780,989	●

Year End Target	£ 56,565,439	●
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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 behind target by £805,862. The Government is funding a hardship scheme which has provided up to £150 to each LCTRS recipient of working age. Targets have been adjusted to reflect these payments. Whilst Covid has affected some customers ability to pay, we haven't been able to take our normal action to recover outstanding amounts through the Magistrates Court. Also, the amount of Council Tax support awarded has increased during the first part of this financial year, reducing the amount to be collected.

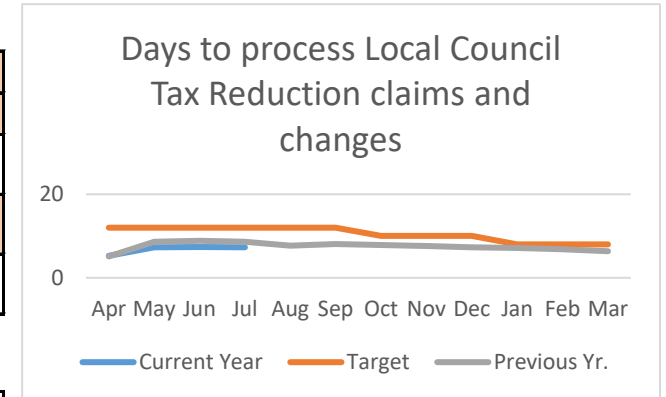
Further recovery action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £5,593. Enforcement action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £66,334.



Local Council Tax Reduction



Days to process Local Council Tax Support					
	Q1	Jul-20	Q3	Q4	
2020/21	7.37	7.32	0.00	0.00	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	8.86	8.62	7.31	6.38	●



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

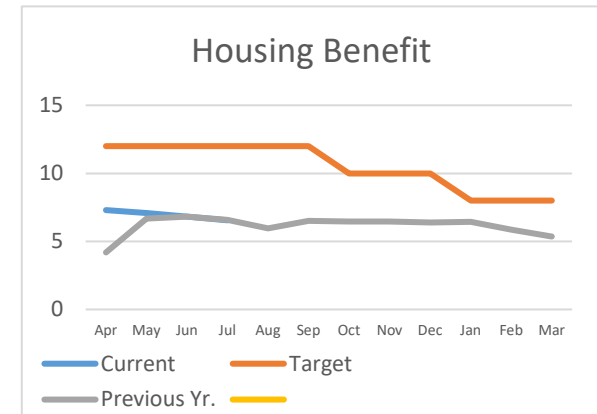
This indicator is currently being met and is expected to achieve target at the end of the year, although an economic downturn could increase demand thereby impacting processing performance.



Housing Benefit



Days to process Housing Benefit					
	Q1	Jul-20	Q3	Q4	
2020/21	6.82	6.55	0.00	0.00	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	6.82	6.58	6.38	5.36	●
Year End Target		8		●	



Description

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

Narrative

This indicator is currently being met and is expected to achieve target at the end of the year, although an economic downturn could increase demand thereby impacting processing performance.



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 are trying to progress closer working relationships with service areas in an attempt prevent and detect fraud and error.

In a broader sense the team are also 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. A business case and project team is progressing the Cambridgeshire Fraud Hub.

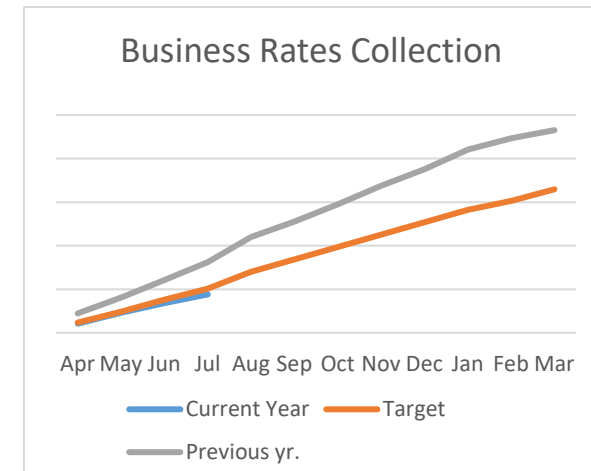
The team are also to review ARP matches for all partners after subscribing to the NFI Mortality Data set matches in June 2020.

	Q1	Jul-20	Q3	Q4
Single Person Discount Fraud	£27,997	£33,809	£0	£0
Local Council Tax Support	£2,122	£2,610	£0	£0
Tenancy Fraud	£0	£0	£0	£0
Other (Council Tax and NDR)	£0	£48,481	£0	£0
Fraud Identified	£30,119	£84,900	£0	£0

Performance Information July 2020

Business Rates

Business Rates Collection					
	Q1	Jul-20	Q3	Q4	
2020/21	£ 13,586,679	£ 17,630,581	£ -	£ -	●
Target	£ 15,170,233	£ 20,214,263	£ 50,816,322	£ 65,881,975	
Refunds	£ 613,691	£ 10,881,162	£ -	£ -	
2019/20	£ 24,147,964	£ 32,365,017	£ 75,034,979	£ 89,323,475	●
Year End Target		65,881,975		●	



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

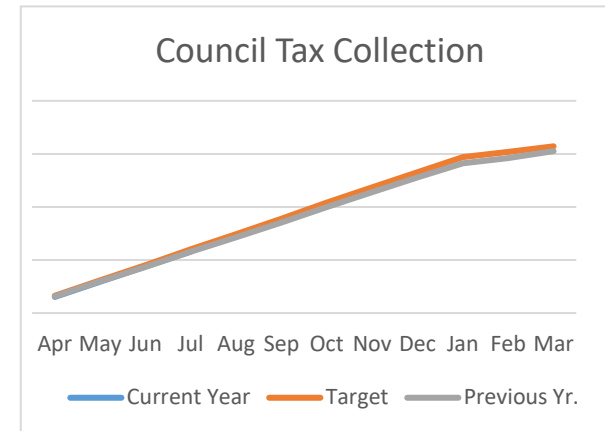
Collection is behind target by £2,583,682 for the current financial year. Collection targets have been adjusted to reflect the amount of Government funded rate relief awarded to businesses which was notified to Government in early April. However, since then new guidance has been issued increasing the number of eligible businesses and others have been identified, which has increased the amount of relief awarded. The authority will receive this funding but it may not be in this financial year. Also, one significant ratepayer is in arrears with instalments amounting to £1.8M and there have been backdated refunds of £862K made in this financial year mostly in respect of appeal against rateable values.

Further recovery action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £5,832. Enforcement action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £4,552.

Council Tax

Council Tax Collection						
	Q1	Jul-20	Q3	Q4		
2020/21	£ 43,986,884	£ 57,939,652	£ -	£ -		●
Target	£ 45,144,195	£ 59,946,086	£ 132,855,610	£ 157,132,596		
Refunds	£ 464,206	£ 761,340	£ -	£ -		
2019/20	£ 43,402,134	£ 57,629,165	£ 127,711,105	£ 146,086,921		●

Year End Target	157,132,596	●
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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

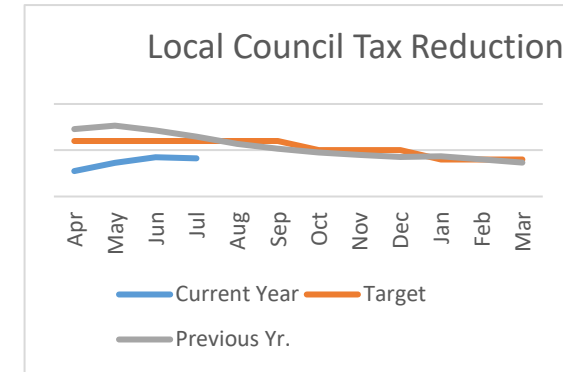
Collection is behind target by £2,006,433. The Government is funding a hardship scheme which has provided up to £150 to each LCTRS recipient of working age. Targets have been adjusted to reflect these payments. Whilst Covid has affected some customers ability to pay, we haven't been able to take our normal action to recover outstanding amounts through the Magistrates Court. Also, the amount of Council Tax support awarded has increased during the first part of this financial year, reducing the amount to be collected.

Further recovery action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £35,110. Enforcement action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £204,745.

Local Council Tax Reduction

Days to process Local Council Tax Support					
	Q1	Jul-20	Q3	Q4	
2020/21	8.49	8.28	0.00	0.00	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	14.29	12.97	8.55	7.33	●

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.

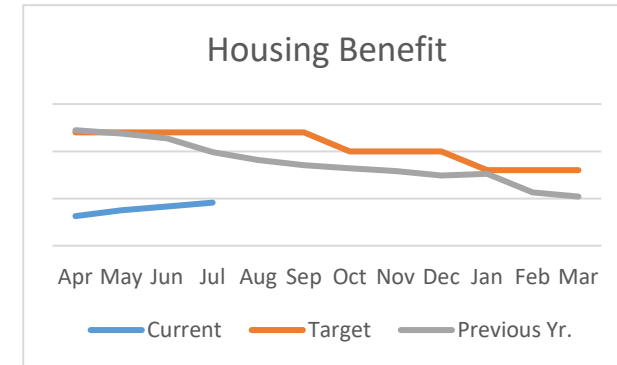
Narrative

This indicator is currently being met and is expected to achieve target at the end of the year, although an economic downturn could increase demand thereby impacting processing performance.

Housing Benefit

Days to process Housing Benefit					
	Q1	Jul-20	Q3	Q4	
2020/21	4.16	4.56	0.00	0.00	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	11.36	9.91	7.42	7.33	●

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 is currently being met and is expected to achieve target at the end of the year, although an economic downturn could increase demand thereby impacting processing performance.

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.

The team are trying to progress closer working relationships with service areas in an attempt prevent and detect fraud and error. The team are also to review ARP matches for all partners after subscribing to the NFI Mortality Data set matches in June 2020.

The team have also assisted in due diligence checks of businesses applying for COVID 19 government grants.

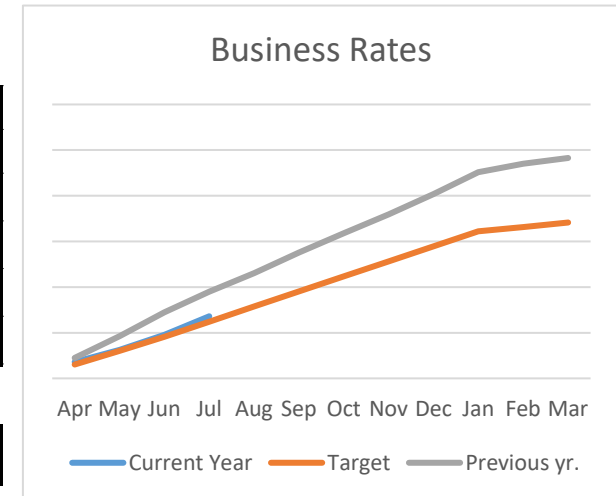
	Q1	Jul-20	Q3	Q4
Single Person Discount Fraud	£191,318	£263,047	£0	£0
Local Council Tax Support	£254	£2,073	£0	£0
Tenancy Fraud	£0	£0	£0	£0
Other (Council Tax and NDR)	£6,353	£14,060	£0	£0
Fraud Identified	£197,925	£279,181	£0	£0

Performance Information July 2020

Business Rates

Business Rates Collection						
	Q1	Jul-20	Q3	Q4		
2020/21	£ 4,752,965	£ 6,799,531	£ -	£ -		●
Target	£ 4,554,615	£ 6,187,898	£ 14,454,996	£ 17,069,917		
Refunds	£ 380,024	£ 441,544	£ -	£ -		
2019/20	£ 7,228,152	£ 9,483,729	£ 20,173,070	£ 23,504,251		●

Year End Target	£17,069,917	●
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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 for the current financial year.

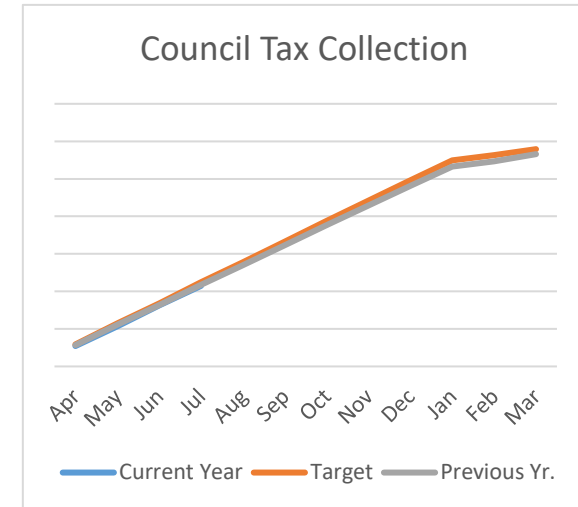
There have been claims by NHS Trusts for charitable rate relief which have been subject to a High Court appeal. If successful this could result in a backdated refund of £1.686M. The High Court have rejected the claim that the NHS Trusts are charities, however the NHS trusts are now appealing this decision.

Further recovery action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £104,714. Enforcement action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £19,807.

Council Tax

Council Tax Collection					
	Q1	Jul-20	Q3	Q4	
2020/21	£ 16,234,901	£ 21,477,928	£ -	£ -	●
Target	£ 16,835,316	£ 22,435,505	£ 49,631,461	£ 57,913,023	
Refunds	£ 137,534	£ 245,583	£ -	£ -	
2019/20	£ 16,330,949	£ 21,766,495	£ 48,152,964	£ 54,669,805	●

Year End Target	£57,913,023	●
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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

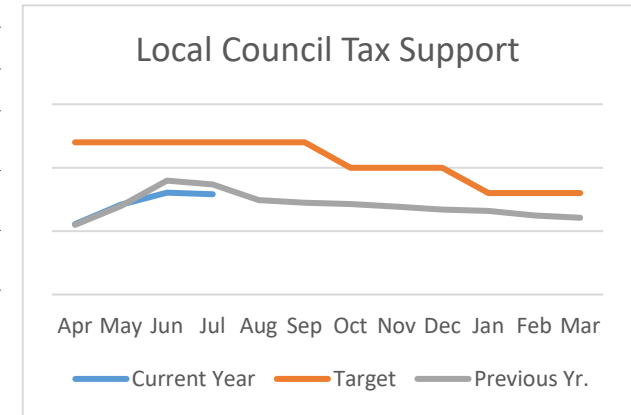
Collection is behind target by £957,577. The Government is funding a hardship scheme which has provided up to £150 to each LCTRS recipient of working age. Targets have been adjusted to reflect these payments. Whilst Covid has affected some customers ability to pay, we haven't been able to take our normal action to recover outstanding amounts through the Magistrates Court. Also, the amount of Council Tax support awarded has increased during the first part of this financial year, reducing the amount to be collected.

Further recovery action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £5,824. Enforcement action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £99,213.

Local Council Tax Reduction

Days to process Local Council Tax Support					
	Q1	Jul-20	Q3	Q4	
2020/21	8.03	7.90	0.00	0.00	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	8.98	8.67	6.70	6.06	●

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.

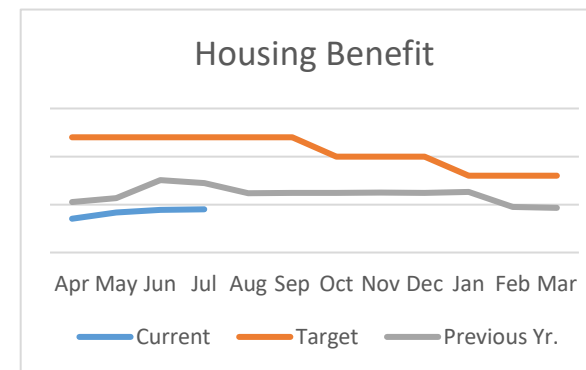
Narrative

This indicator is currently being met and is expected to achieve target at the end of the year, although an economic downturn could increase demand thereby impacting processing performance.

Housing Benefit

Days to process Housing Benefit					
	Q1	Jul-20	Q3	Q4	
2020/21	4.43	4.50	0.00	0.00	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	7.54	7.24	6.20	4.65	●

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 is currently being met and is expected to achieve target at the end of the year, although an economic downturn could increase demand thereby impacting processing performance.

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 closely with the Housing and Housing Option Team with positive results.

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 trying to progress closer working relationships with service areas in an attempt prevent and detect fraud and error.

In a broader sense the team are also 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. A business case and project team is progressing the Cambridgeshire Fraud Hub.

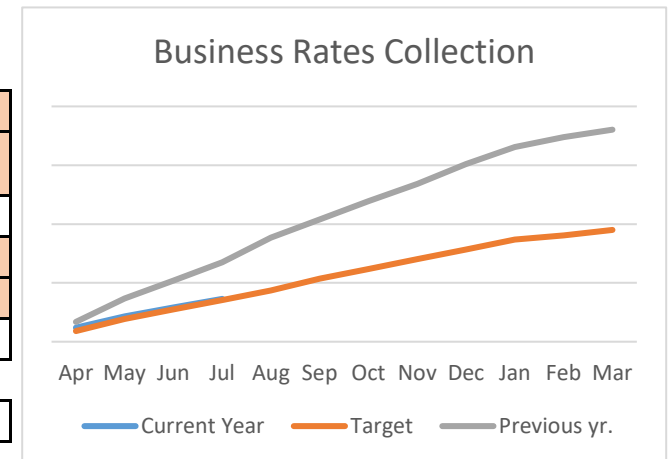
The team are also to review ARP matches for all partners after subscribing to the NFI Mortality Data set matches in June 2020.

	Q1	Jul-20	Q3	Q4
Single Person Discount Fraud	£51,619	£78,529	£0	£0
Local Council Tax Support	£0	£2,145	£0	£0
Tenancy Fraud	£0	£0	£0	£0
Other (Council Tax and NDR)	£48,463	£53,797	£0	£0
Fraud Identified	£100,082	£134,471	£0	£0

Business Rates

Business Rates Collection					
	Q1	Jul-20	Q3	Q4	
2020/21	£ 11,674,180	£ 14,559,028	£ -	£ -	●
Target	£ 10,961,516	£ 14,149,928	£ 31,387,484	£ 38,002,010	
Refunds	£ 887,279	£ 1,097,784	£ -	£ -	
2019/20	£ 20,840,864	£ 27,038,041	£ 60,433,764	£ 69,587,482	●

Year End Target	38,002,010	●
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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

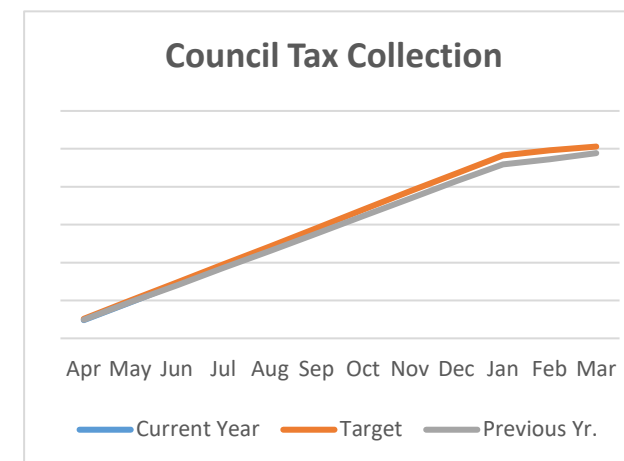
Collection is on target for the current financial year.

There have been claims by NHS Trusts for charitable rate relief which have been subject to a High Court appeal. If successful this could result in a backdated refund of £5.2M. The High Court have rejected the claim that the NHS Trusts are charities, however the NHS trusts are now appealing this decision.

Further recovery action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £5,800. Enforcement action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £4,733.

Council Tax Collection							
	Q1		Jul-20		Q3	Q4	
2020/21	£	28,542,242	£	37,722,961	£ -	£ -	●
Target	£	29,393,932	£	39,107,589	£ 87,139,600	£ 101,183,930	
Refunds	£	281,783	£	439,937	£ -	£ -	
2019/20	£	27,937,932	£	37,214,966	£ 82,920,290	£ 94,467,436	●

Year End Target	101,183,930	●
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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

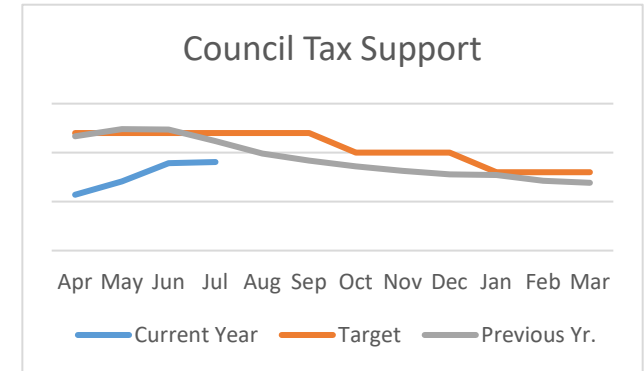
Collection is behind target by £1,384,628. The Government is funding a hardship scheme which has provided up to £150 to each LCTRS recipient of working age. Targets have been adjusted to reflect these payments. Whilst Covid has affected some customers ability to pay, we haven't been able to take our normal action to recover outstanding amounts through the Magistrates Court. Also, the amount of Council Tax support awarded has increased during the first part of this financial year, reducing the amount to be collected.

Further recovery action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £33,868. Enforcement action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £149,936.

Days to process Local Council Tax Support

	Q1	Jul-20	Q3	Q4	
2020/21	8.91	9.04	0.00	0.00	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	12.36	11.18	7.77	6.92	●

Year End Target	8	●
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Description

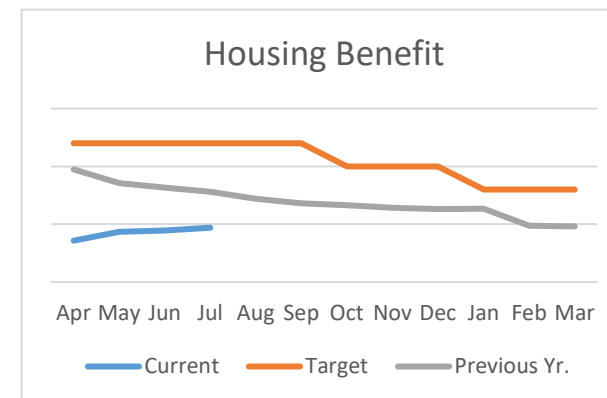
This indicator measures the average number of days to process Council Tax reduction new claims and change of circumstances.

Narrative

This indicator is currently being met and is expected to achieve target at the end of the year, although an economic downturn could increase demand thereby impacting processing performance.

Days to process Housing Benefit					
	Q1	Jul-20	Q3	Q4	
2020/21	4.47	4.70	0.00	0.00	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	8.16	7.82	6.30	4.81	●

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 is currently being met and is expected to achieve target at the end of the year, although an economic downturn could increase demand thereby impacting processing performance.

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 where investigation agreements are in place. 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 have assisted in the identification of businesses entitled to the NDR government grant scheme. The team are also to review ARP matches for all partners after subscribing to the NFI Mortality Data set matches in June 2020.

	Q1	Jul-20	Q3	Q4
Single Person Discount Fraud	£140,444	£191,758	£0	£0
Local Council Tax Support	£2,327	£7,405	£0	£0
Tenancy Fraud	£6,480	£9,720	£0	£0
Other (Council Tax and NDR)	£5,177	£5,177	£0	£0
Fraud Identified	£154,428	£214,059	£0	£0

Service Updates as at July 2020



Enforcement

All Enforcement visits were suspended by The Ministry of Justice in March 2020 and re-commenced on 24 August 2020, however we are not permitted to enter properties to take control of goods. In the meantime we have continued to try and engage with customers offering long term payment arrangements and assisting customers where possible. Consequently the level of collection has reduced substantially. This year we have collected £1M compared to £1.838 at the same point last year.

Further Recovery

With effect from March 2020 all recovery actions were temporarily suspended until recently and we have now re-commenced these actions. However, income of £216K in total has been received compared to £416K at the same point last year. We have £1.78 M debt secured through Charging Orders.

Non-Domestic Rates

The team has had an increased workload over the first two months of this year due to the additional rate reliefs to be awarded and the payment of grants to businesses. This has seen extremely high levels of telephone calls and correspondence, however the team has worked hard to bring the outstanding work down to normal levels.

The revaluation planned to take place on 1 April 2021 has been postponed until 1 April 2023 with an antecedent date of 1 April 2021 (this is the date that the valuation are based on).

A bill to implement rate relief for public lavatories is currently before Parliament and it is intended to have a retrospective effect for 2020/21

The Government has issued a Call for Evidence in respect of it's commitment to carry out a fundamental review of business rates. Views are being sought on the multiplier, reliefs, transitional relief, valuations, rating Lists, the billing process and alternatives to business rates.

Council Tax

As expected Covid -19 has had an impact on collection during April and May but we expect the application of the hardship fund payments to accounts during July to significantly offset this and we will have a clearer picture of collection against target at that point. We have updated our website and phone message to provide help and support to those struggling to pay through this difficult time and are signposting customers to claim Universal Credit and Council Tax Support.

We have offered the option of a two month payment break to provide more flexibility during Covid-19. An online form has been implemented to allow customers to request a 2 month payment break, a change from 10 to 12 instalments or a change of payment date. To date we have received over 1600 completed forms and the fraud and enforcement teams have helped us process these requests in a timely manner.

We have sent 2 rounds of 'soft reminders' which have had a positive effect on collection. The reminders have signposted customers to the flexible payment form and other help available from the Council, DWP and other outside agencies and we have ensured that direct debit payments have not been collected where a hardship payment is due and the account balance is £150 or less.

The first Statutory Reminders will be issued in August for customer in arrears for 2019/20 and behind by three instalments or more for the current year.

Throughput for council tax billing is up 26% on last year overall and now that the lockdown restrictions are gradually lifting we have seen an increase in the number of moves reported to almost the same level as the same period last year. We have remained in a great position workwise with outstanding work being well below the level it was at the same point last year. This is a direct result of the project to introduce Generic Council Tax Billing Officer which provide a resilient team who have been able to switch between billing and benefits to help cope with ever changing work loads and priorities during the pandemic. Being up to date and having the tiered phone messages in place has helped us maintain a level of 47% fewer phone calls during May as compared to last year and achieve a handling rate of 99.01% in billing.

Benefits

Whilst both Council Tax Support and Benefits performance is presently achieving targets, there is a risk COVID-19 could cause an economic downturn with potentially significant increases in unemployment and claims.

We continue to see significant increases in claims since March compared to the same period last year and we expect to see a second spike when the furlough scheme ends. Throughput overall for benefits has been approximately a third up on 2019/20.

In April we changed the Local Council Tax Support schemes for all partners to include a 'tolerance rule' which is applied to monthly changes in Universal Credit which are notified to us via Universal Credit Data Share (UCDS) from DWP. The new rule allows us to ignore changes in Universal Credit of under £15.00 per week and our software provider, Capita, has worked with us to develop and implement new functionality to do this automatically.

We currently receive an average of just under 4000 UCDS records from the DWP per week and we fully automate around 53% of these. The introduction of the tolerance rule has reduced the number of Council Tax Support re-assessments resulting from DWP UCDS records by 32%, which is in line with the results of modelling undertaken during consultation. This in turn has reduced the number of Council Tax adjustment notices, and refund request and allows customers to manage their payments easier.

The Council Tax Support Hardship Fund awards were issued to every qualifying working age customer by the end of July 2020, either by a credit of up to £150 on to their Council Tax account or by arranging a refund where one is due. We are monitoring expenditure given the rise in caseload due to COVID-19 to identify risk that the fund will exhaust prior to the end of the year. Representations continue to be made to HMCLG that the fund will not support awards to every customer.

ARP Website and Online Self Service

April 2020 has seen an increase in website activity on the ARP website by 60% when compared with April 2019 due to the effect of the Covid Pandemic resulting in all the ARP offices being closed for face to face visits.

The ARP Strategic Support Manager has been working with Capita, the main software provider for Revenues and Benefits in establishing a design team to develop the Self Serve Portal that is easy to use and satisfies the requirements expected of a modern self-service option. Although at its early stage, there have been discussions between the ARP Management to Senior Managers at Capita offering a more collaborative approach in development of their products, making them relevant to the Revenues and Benefits Strategic Business needs.

As a result of the Digital Design Meetings, Capita have issued a new release, which has included some of the recommendations from the customer group and have also established a listing of requested improvements for the customer base to decide which suggestions should received the highest priority based on business needs.

Fraud and Compliance

In line with Government advice and guidance, property and business Visits were temporarily suspended and Fraud and Compliance staff, where possible, were redeployed into other areas of the ARP business that were receiving a significant increase of incoming work as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the usual increase as a result of the Annual Billing project.

A full Risk Assessment has been agreed across the partnership and Visits have successfully resumed, with social distancing restrictions in place and supplies of appropriate Personal Protective Equipment provided to all Visiting Officers.

Norfolk County Council have committed to continue providing funding until March 2022 and Suffolk County Council until March 2021, at which point a further review will take place. Norfolk County Council have additionally funded a Premium review of Single Person Discounts for both Breckland District Council and Norwich City Council for 2020/2021 with matches against a number of additional data sets held within the National Fraud Initiative (NFI). The results from the 2019/2020 Breckland Council Premium matches exceeded expectations.

Whilst there is currently limited work on Fenland and East Cambridgeshire cases, newly awarded Single Person Discounts continue to be reviewed by the Compliance Team with positive outcomes.

There is continued success for the ARP Fraud and Compliance team who continue to work closely with local DWP Fraud Teams in the joint working initiative. Ongoing relationship building continues with the teams across the partnership.

During the pandemic it is not possible to interview customers under caution on a face to face basis. Advice has been taken from the Law Society and the Crown Prosecution Service in relation to alternative methods of interviewing under caution. With assistance from the solicitor used for ARP Fraud prosecutions it has been agreed that customers will be interviewed by letter and a process and procedure has been set up to enable this.

With the ARP Management arrangement with Norwich City Council it continues to allow us to employ an additional resource fully funded by Norwich City Council and Norfolk County Council, to undertake Single Person Discount Reviews and Council Tax Support investigations for Norwich City Council.

Having undertaken additional Single Person Discount reviews for Norwich City Council with the Premium service for 2020/2021 Norfolk County Council have funded an additional resource. A recruitment process has now been completed and the additional resource is now in post and has been trained entirely by way of virtual solutions.

Breckland Council and Norwich City Council are also part of the Norfolk Fraud Hub. As previously mentioned, the Fraud Hub is fully funded by Norfolk County Council and is now matching additional data sets from all authorities to identify Fraud and Error across the county. The Fraud Team to continue to work alongside Norfolk County on this project and are also in the process of reviewing results.

The Fraud Team are also progressing relationships with social housing providers across the partnership looking at opportunities to investigate housing fraud. Paid investigations for two social housing providers have either been concluded or are currently being investigated. This has resulted in the successful recovery of a property as part of a paid for investigation and we are currently awaiting the court result in relation to the criminal case.

Better Customer Journeys Programme

While several projects have taken a 'back seat' due to Covid-19 contingency response, many have actually been catalysed by the crisis. The updates above on Council Tax and Benefits talk in more detail about the outcomes, all of which directly support families, communities and businesses by supporting uplifts in capacity and speed of response.

Through the Better Customer Journeys Programme, ARP is identifying how to build on the major increases in ARP website visits and Self-Service usage. 28 August is the first meeting of ARP's customer strategy team since February, when the partners' customer service heads will begin to map out how best ARP can support customer service teams' new, emerging operating models. From this will come a gap analysis, and a set of plans for closing that gap. For example, we will discuss how best to capitalise on increased online activity and interest and make sure our communications with customers are pointing that way (allowing more opportunity to support traditional channels for people who need them).

Since April, we've met every week with Capita One's Digital product and helpdesk teams. These sessions work alongside the design workshops touched on last quarter to keep the pressure on Capita and ensure the partnership can deliver on its self-service aspirations.

In a separate but related strand, ARP is developing its change delivery and project management capabilities, which apply to Better Customer Journeys projects, the Performance Framework Programme, further automation, and other standalone projects. Most of the management team have now been through project management training, and we're increasing our use of our new Change Delivery Framework.