



Joint Committee Performance Report

October 2020



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All Partner Councils Combined



Business Rates Collection					
	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	
2020/21	£ 40,382,156	£ 80,234,076	£ 94,112,908	£ -	●
Target	£ 38,080,964	£ 78,313,282	£ 91,704,016	£ 148,138,900	●
2019/20	£ 68,526,436	£ 137,479,211	£ 158,709,340	£ 243,658,978	●
			Year End Target	£148,138,900	●

Council Tax Collection					
	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	
2020/21	£127,454,324	£251,468,250	£294,950,715	£0	●
Target	£131,101,223	£258,456,805	£302,131,273	£454,258,929	●
2019/20	£125,766,695	£247,998,105	£289,920,459	£439,901,785	●
			Year End Target	£454,258,929	●

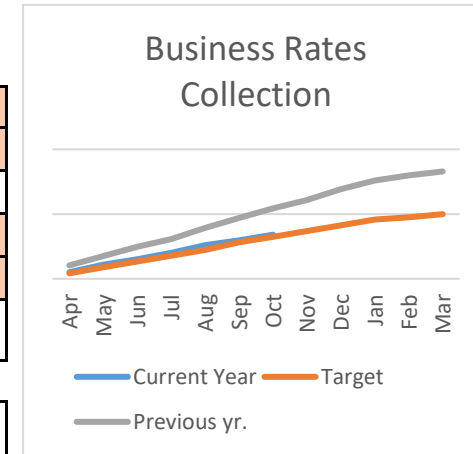
Number of Electronic Forms Received					
	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	
2020/21	12,089	23,189	27,950	0	●
2019/20	9,375	19,525	23,237	36,405	●
			Year End Target	36405	●

Fraud and Compliance	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	Yr Target
Single Person Discount Fraud	£529,263	£942,485	£1,071,052	£0	£500,000
Local Council Tax Support	£6,050	£20,001	£38,439	£0	£150,000
Tenancy Fraud	£6,480	£105,960	£105,960	£0	£400,000
Other (Council Tax and NDR)	£113,556	£301,455	£327,319	£0	£250,000
Fraud Identified	£655,349	£1,369,901	£1,542,770	£0	£1,300,000

Business Rates

Business Rates Collection									
	Q1		Q2		Oct-20	Q4			
2020/21	£	6,046,513	£	11,935,167	£	13,639,228	£	-	●
Target	£	5,351,728	£	11,332,757	£	13,009,638	£	19,979,420	
Refunds	£	403,258	£	1,240,252	£	1,409,366	£	-	
2019/20	£	9,936,479	£	18,830,045	£	21,827,359	£	33,171,404	●

Year End Target	£	19,979,420	●
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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.

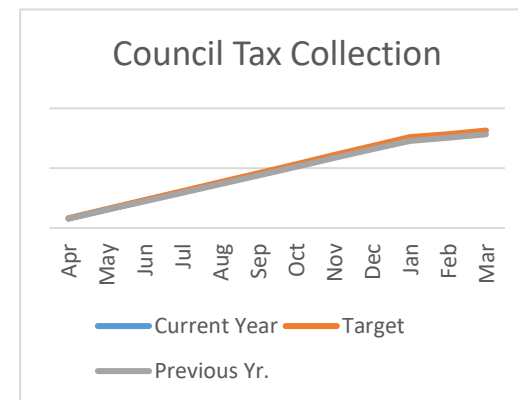
Narrative

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 £1,400. Enforcement action in 2021/21 has resulted in collection of £19,438.

Council Tax

Council Tax Collection						
	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4		
2020/21	£ 22,830,485	£ 44,806,050	£ 52,687,463	£ -		●
Target	£ 23,306,834	£ 45,717,564	£ 53,415,906	£ 81,463,941		
Refunds	£ 204,527	£ 489,303	£ 559,238	£ -		
2019/20	£ 22,364,957	£ 43,876,573	£ 51,268,089	£ 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 £728,443. 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 have only recently 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 this financial year, reducing the amount to be collected.

Further recovery action in 20/21 has resulted in collection of £27,095. Enforcement action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £249,975.

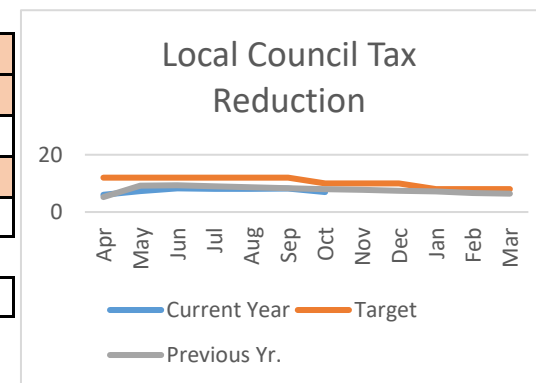
Charging Orders have been obtained to secure £368,532 debt.

Local Council Tax Reduction

Days to process Local Council Tax Support

	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	
2020/21	8.26	8.20	6.98	0.00	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	9.34	8.26	8.01	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.

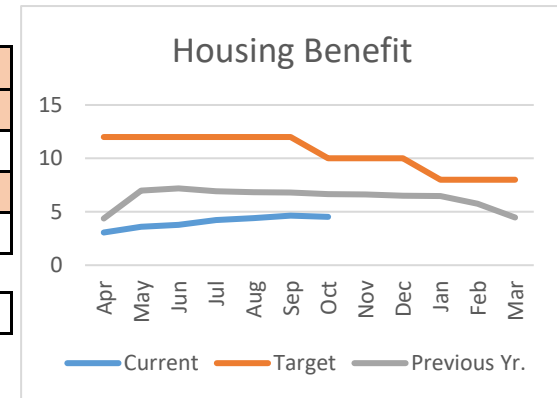
Narrative

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	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	
2020/21	3.77	4.64	4.52	0.00	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	7.19	6.81	6.64	4.47	●

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 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	Oct-20	Q4
Single Person Discount Fraud	£117,886	£236,327	£257,646	£0
Local Council Tax Support	£1,346	£5,477	£10,311	£0
Tenancy Fraud	£0	£0	£0	£0
Other (Council Tax and NDR)	£53,563	£65,107	£65,107	£0
Fraud Identified	£172,794	£306,911	£333,064	£0



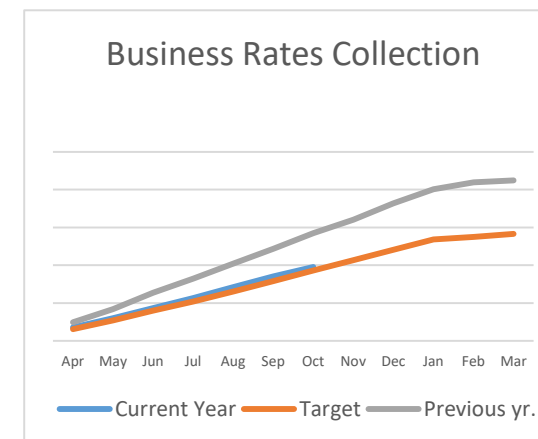
Performance Information October 2020



Business Rates

Business Rates Collection					
	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	
2020/21	£ 4,321,819	£ 8,513,137	£ 9,770,943	£ -	●
Target	£ 3,978,590	£ 7,915,784	£ 9,304,153	£ 14,153,152	
Refunds	£ 219,614	£ 429,251	£ 666,584	£ -	
2019/20	£ 6,372,977	£ 12,173,009	£ 14,254,670	£ 20,979,468	●

Full Year Target	£14,153,152	●
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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 £9,463.

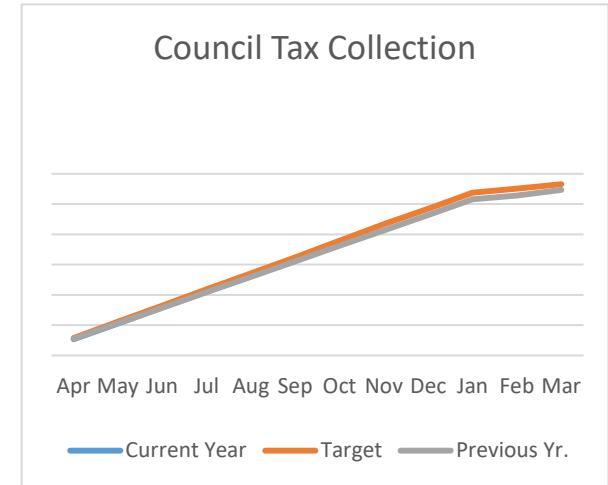


Council Tax



Council Tax Collection					
	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	
2020/21	£ 15,859,812	£ 31,561,919	£ 36,957,731	£ -	●
Target	£ 16,420,947	£ 32,428,966	£ 37,870,561	£ 56,565,439	
Refunds	£ 149,975	£ 342,403	£ 404,086	£ -	
2019/20	£ 15,730,723	£ 31,067,215	£ 36,283,378	£ 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 £912,830. 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 have only recently 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 financial year, reducing the amount to be collected.

Further recovery action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £12,547. Enforcement action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £107,399.

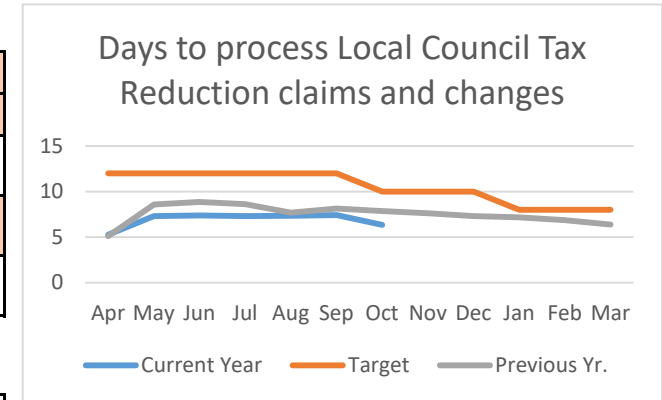
Charging Orders have been obtained to secure £312,386 debt.



Local Council Tax Reduction



Days to process Local Council Tax Support					
	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	
2020/21	7.37	7.42	6.33	0.00	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	8.86	8.12	7.86	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.

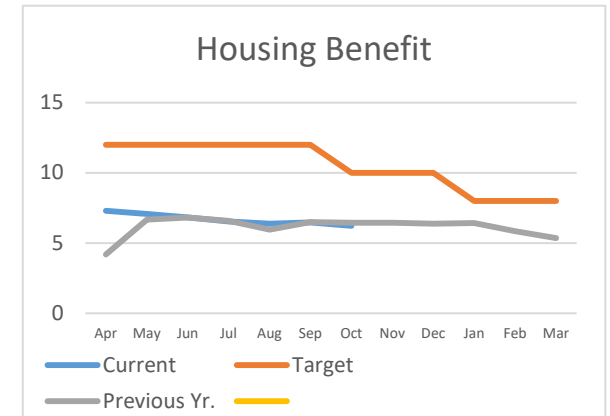


Housing Benefit



Days to process Housing Benefit					
	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	
2020/21	6.82	6.48	6.23	0.00	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	6.82	6.50	6.46	5.36	●

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 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.

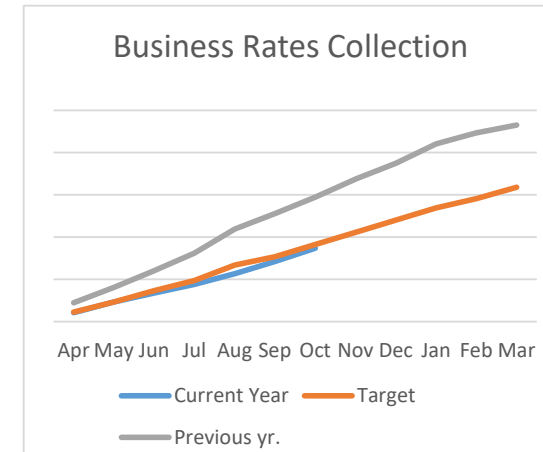
The team are also to review ARP matches for all partners after subscribing to the NFI Mortality Data set matches in June 2020.

	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4
Single Person Discount Fraud	£27,997	£40,118	£53,075	£0
Local Council Tax Support	£2,122	£2,610	£2,610	£0
Tenancy Fraud	£0	£93,000	£93,000	£0
Other (Council Tax and NDR)	£0	£101,939	£101,939	£0
Fraud Identified	£30,119	£237,667	£250,624	£0

Business Rates

Business Rates Collection					
	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	
2020/21	£ 13,586,679	£ 28,476,749	£ 34,751,486	£ -	●
Target	£ 14,599,314	£ 30,783,361	£ 36,552,166	£ 63,596,344	
Refunds	£ 613,691	£ 1,733,063	£ 2,110,452	£ -	
2019/20	£ 24,147,964	£ 51,103,221	£ 58,955,089	£ 89,323,475	●

Year End Target	63,596,344	●
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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 behind target by £1,800,680 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.

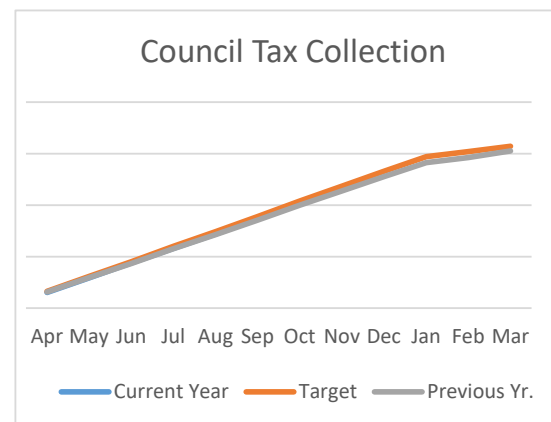
One significant ratepayer is in arrears with instalments amounting to £2.9M and there have been backdated refunds of £1.7M made in this financial year mostly in respect of appeal against rateable values.

Further recovery action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £11,650. Enforcement action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £16,638.

Council Tax

Council Tax Collection					
	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	
2020/21	£ 43,986,884	£ 86,547,244	£ 101,529,943	£ -	●
Target	£ 45,144,195	£ 88,858,483	£ 104,053,205	£ 157,132,596	
Refunds	£ 464,206	£ 1,116,190	£ 1,357,213	£ -	
2019/20	£ 43,402,134	£ 85,413,139	£ 100,026,752	£ 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 £2,523,263. 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 have only recently been able to start taking our normal action to recover outstanding amounts through the Magistrates Court. Also, the amount of Council Tax support awarded has increased during this financial year, reducing the amount to be collected.

Further recovery action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £63,014. Enforcement action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £394,589.

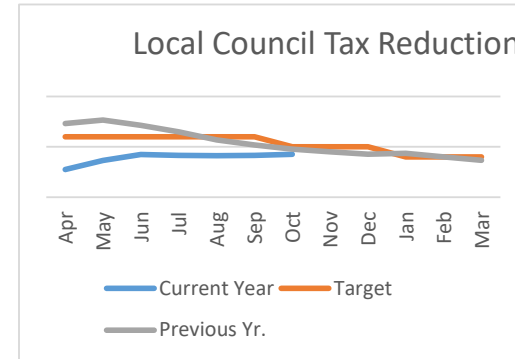


Local Council Tax Reduction



Days to process Local Council Tax Support					
	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	
2020/21	8.49	8.32	8.52	0.00	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	14.29	10.36	9.54	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.

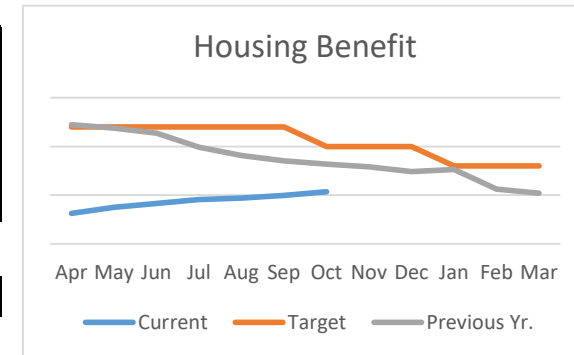
Narrative

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	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	
2020/21	4.16	4.98	5.35	0.00	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	11.36	8.52	8.18	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.

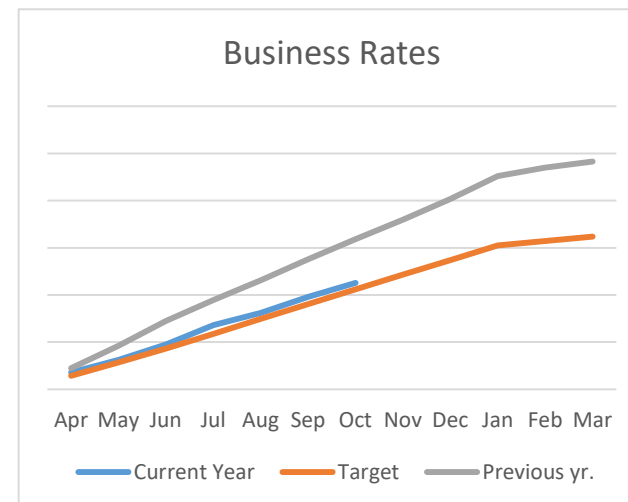
	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4
Single Person Discount Fraud	£191,318	£336,805	£382,147	£0
Local Council Tax Support	£254	£2,365	£7,215	£0
Tenancy Fraud	£0	£0	£0	£0
Other (Council Tax and NDR)	£6,353	£14,060	£14,060	£0
Fraud Identified	£197,925	£353,230	£403,423	£0

Performance Information October 2020

Business Rates

Business Rates Collection					
	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	
2020/21	£ 4,752,965	£ 9,815,866	£ 11,279,721	£ -	●
Target	£ 4,315,013	£ 9,028,512	£ 10,586,019	£ 16,182,693	
Refunds	£ 380,024	£ 767,676	£ 966,928	£ -	
2019/20	£ 7,228,152	£ 13,789,980	£ 15,902,523	£ 23,504,251	●

Year End Target	£16,182,693	●
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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.

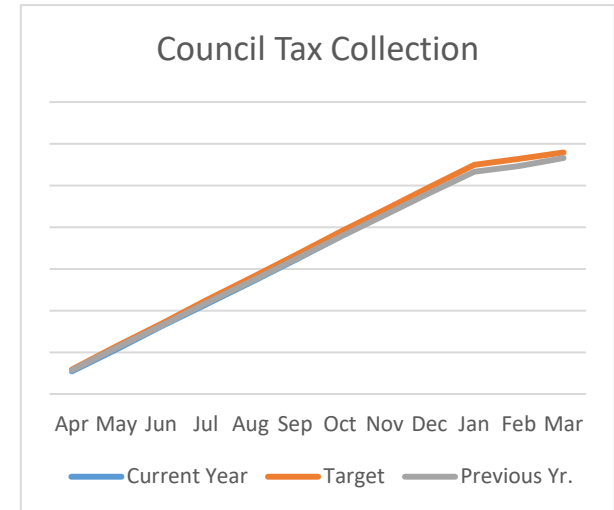
There have been claims by NHS Trusts for charitable rate relief which have been subject to a High Court appeal. If successful this could result in a backdated refund of £1.686M. The High Court have rejected the claim that the NHS Trusts are charities, however the NHS trusts are now appealing this decision.

Further recovery action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £108,648. Enforcement action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £35,335.

Council Tax

Council Tax Collection					
	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	
2020/21	£ 16,234,901	£ 32,182,036	£ 37,721,322	£ -	●
Target	£ 16,835,316	£ 33,271,032	£ 38,836,473	£ 57,913,023	
Refunds	£ 137,534	£ 395,346	£ 494,482	£ -	
2019/20	£ 16,330,949	£ 32,276,827	£ 37,676,667	£ 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 £1,115,151. 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 have only recently 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 financial year, reducing the amount to be collected.

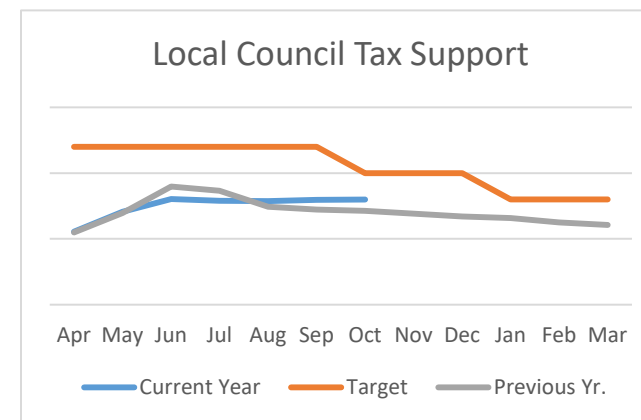
Further recovery action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £27,103. Enforcement action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £180,962.

Charging Orders have been obtained to secure £291,509 debt.

Local Council Tax Reduction

Days to process Local Council Tax Support					
	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	
2020/21	8.03	7.98	7.99	0.00	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	8.98	7.24	7.13	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.

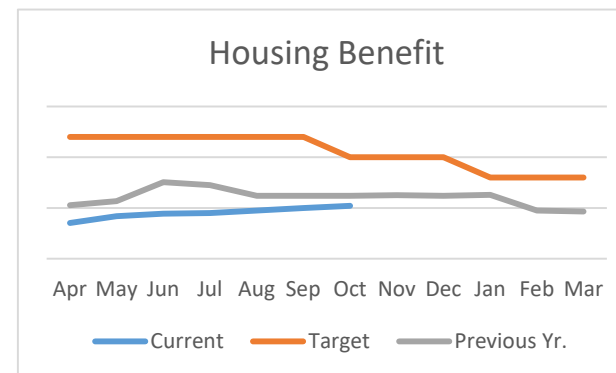
Narrative

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	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	
2020/21	4.43	4.98	5.21	0.00	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	7.54	6.20	6.21	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.

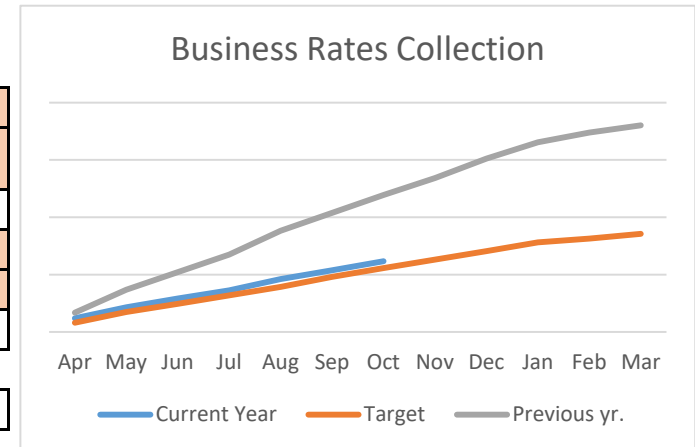
The team are also to review ARP matches for all partners after subscribing to the NFI Mortality Data set matches in June 2020.

	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4
Single Person Discount Fraud	£51,619	£99,378	£132,166	£0
Local Council Tax Support	£0	£2,145	£2,519	£0
Tenancy Fraud	£0	£0	£0	£0
Other (Council Tax and NDR)	£48,463	£93,122	£118,986	£0
Fraud Identified	£100,082	£194,644	£253,671	£0

Business Rates

Business Rates Collection						
	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4		
2020/21	£ 11,674,180	£ 21,493,157	£ 24,671,530	£ -		●
Target	£ 9,836,319	£ 19,252,868	£ 22,252,040	£ 34,227,291		
Refunds	£ 887,279	£ 1,617,524	£ 1,862,537	£ -		
2019/20	£ 20,840,864	£ 41,582,956	£ 47,769,699	£ 69,587,482		●

Year End Target	34,227,291	●
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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

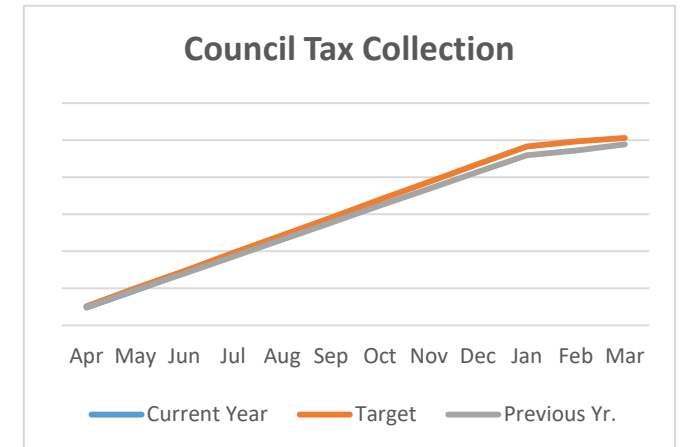
Collection is on target for the current financial year.

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 £15,529. Enforcement action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £36,916.

Council Tax Collection					
	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	
2020/21	£ 28,542,242	£ 56,371,002	£ 66,054,256	£ -	●
Target	£ 29,393,932	£ 58,180,760	£ 67,955,127	£ 101,183,930	
Refunds	£ 281,783	£ 637,124	£ 742,308	£ -	
2019/20	£ 27,937,932	£ 55,364,351	£ 64,665,573	£ 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 £1,900,871. 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 have only recently been able to book a Magistrates Court Hearing to obtain liability orders in January. Also, the amount of Council Tax support awarded has increased during the financial year, reducing the amount to be collected.

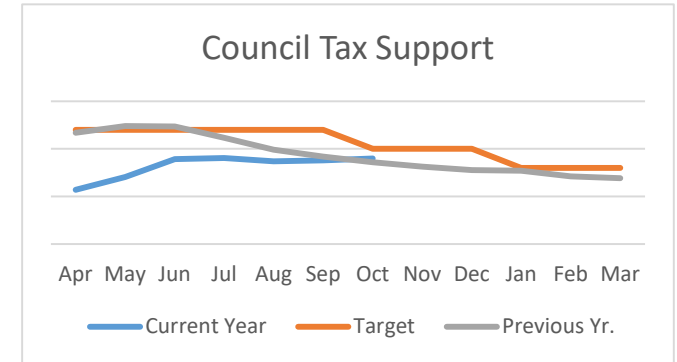
Further recovery action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £63,742. Enforcement action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £272,544.

Charging Orders have been obtained to secure £469,008 debt.

Days to process Local Council Tax Support

	Q1	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	
2020/21	8.91	8.79	8.99	0.00	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	12.36	9.18	8.61	6.92	●

Year End Target	8	●
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Description

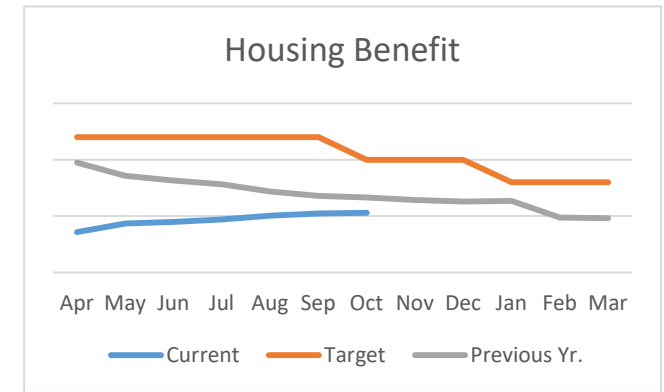
This indicator measures the average number of days to process Council Tax reduction new claims and change of circumstances.

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	Q2	Oct-20	Q4	
2020/21	4.47	5.24	5.29	0.00	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	8.16	6.80	6.65	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	Q2	Oct-20	Q4
Single Person Discount Fraud	£140,444	£229,857	£246,017	£0
Local Council Tax Support	£2,327	£7,405	£15,784	£0
Tenancy Fraud	£6,480	£12,960	£12,960	£0
Other (Council Tax and NDR)	£5,177	£27,227	£27,227	£0
Fraud Identified	£154,428	£277,449	£301,988	£0

Service Updates as at October 2020



Enforcement

All Enforcement visits were suspended from 23 March 2020 until 24 August 2020, however since then we have resumed visits and the amounts collected by the team have risen although not yet back to the levels we saw last year. In the recent lockdown we were not required to cease visits and therefore have continued as previously with all the necessary personal protective equipment and risk assessment in place. We continue to try and engage with customers offering long term payment arrangements and assisting customers where possible. The team has also recently taken on the collection of parking fines for East and West Suffolk

This year we have collected £1.996M compared to £3.016M at the same point last year.

Further Recovery

With effect from March 2020 all recovery actions were temporarily suspended until the summer and therefore the amount collected through these actions has been less than in the last financial year. Income of £340K in total has been received compared to £791K at the same point last year. We have £1.925 M debt secured through Charging Orders.

Funding has been secured from Norfolk County Council for the forthcoming financial year in respect of this work and we have approached Suffolk County Council to continue funding beyond March 2021. Fenland District Council and East Cambridgeshire District Council are also contributing to allow this work to be carried out for all ARP partners.

Non-Domestic Rates

The team 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 saw extremely high levels of telephone calls and correspondence, however the team has worked hard to bring the outstanding work down to normal levels. A new set of business grants was announced for the recent lockdown and this will again increase the volume of work for the team. Our website has been updated with the latest information on grants available.

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 valuations 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

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 were issued in August for customers in arrears for 2019/20 and behind by three instalments or more for the current year. The Magistrates Courts have now re-opened and have stayed open during the latest lockdown. We have Court Hearings booked for all authorities.

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, although we are seeing increased demand due to the buoyant housing market with moves at very high levels. We are prioritising moves and have a plan in place to recover the position. 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, despite the increased demand attributed to COVID-19. There is a risk the second COVID-19 lockdown that started on the 5th November 2020 COVID-19 could cause a prolonged economic downturn with potentially significant increases in unemployment and claims. We continue to see significant increases in claims and 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 Universal Credit Data Share (UCDS) records from DWP. The new rule means that changes in Universal Credit of under £15.00 per week are ignored by the Capita system and are automatically processed. 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.

Since the end of September we have worked with the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) to implement the COVID-19 Track & Trace Self Isolation payment scheme. This scheme pays £500 to each person notified of a requirement to self isolate who meets the eligibility criteria, namely receiving specified Benefits, who cannot work from home and has a loss of income/is on a low income. We achieved the scheme launch of 12th October 2020, despite having to quickly design and configure an application form. Whilst DHSC fund the programme, we are seeing demand outstrip the forecast volumes and anticipate demand to exponentially increase throughout Winter, as the number of persons required to self isolate increases.

ARP Systems and Digital

There continues to be a significant increase in activity on the ARP website by up to 60% compared to the 2019 year, due to the effect of the Covid Pandemic with all the ARP offices being closed for face to face visits and only offered for priority customers.

The ARP Technical Team Manager, Paula Fry, continues work with Capita to develop the requirements expected of a modern self-service option and has set up weekly meetings between ARP and Capita to progress and resolve outstanding helpdesk calls. A more collaborative relationship with Capita has been demonstrated recently with the implementation of Total Mobile Software to aid the visiting officers in their work.

In the run up to Christmas and in conjunction with West Suffolk ICT, Paula Fry will be leading on the mandatory upgrade of the Capita platform for all five partners' databases, to be in place by December 31st in readiness for the annual billing project, starting with the test phase in from January 2021.

Fraud and Compliance

The Fraud team this month are pleased to confirm this month of a successful prosecution regarding tenancy fraud. The tenant was found guilty of subletting a Housing Association property and sentenced to 12 weeks, suspended for 2 years.

With new restrictions in place by Central Government, currently scheduled to end on December 2nd, in response to the increased cases of Covid-19 infections the fraud team are reviewing the work of the visiting officers, in order to comply with current Government guidance. The team have carried out a full risk assessment which has enabled procedures and protocols for the visiting officers to be put in place, along with the supply of relevant Personal Protective Equipment for visits. Desk based Fraud and Compliance work continues as usual, with all of the Fraud Team able to fully work from home.

Following discussions with East Camb's DC and Fenland DC, Katey Mills (ARP Assistant Fraud Manager) presented a 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 consistently seen savings outweighing the costs of the work in the areas of Local Council Tax Reduction and Single Person Discounts particularly, over a number of years.

Norfolk County Council have committed to continue providing funding until March 2022. Suffolk County Council until March 2021 and are being asked to continue funding into 2021/22. 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.

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.

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.

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 was 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.

The ARP's customer strategy team are currently completing 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 are increasing our use of the new Change Delivery Framework.