



Joint Committee Performance Report

March 2021



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All Partner Councils Combined



Business Rates Collection					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
2020/21	£ 40,382,156	£ 80,234,076	£ 122,593,614	£ 151,680,832	●
Target	£ 38,080,964	£ 78,313,282	£ 118,246,156	£ 148,138,900	●
2019/20	£ 68,526,436	£ 137,479,211	£ 179,586,617	£ 243,658,978	●
	Year End Target			£148,138,900	●

Council Tax Collection					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
2020/21	£127,454,324	£251,468,250	£379,825,898	£454,493,276	●
Target	£131,101,223	£258,456,805	£386,585,468	£454,258,929	●
2019/20	£125,766,695	£247,998,105	£330,460,654	£439,901,785	●
	Year End Target			£454,258,929	●

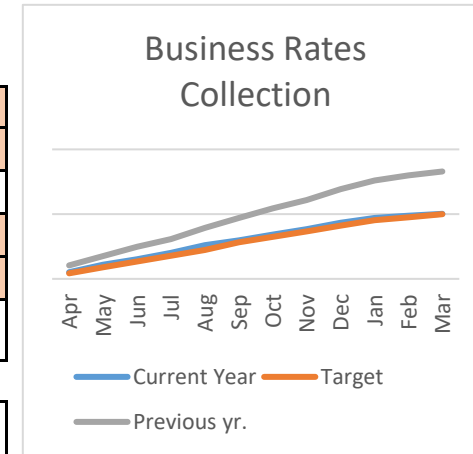
Number of Electronic Forms Received					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
2020/21	12,089	23,189	37,184	55,159	●
2019/20	9,375	19,525	28,498	36,405	●
	Year End Target			36405	●

Fraud and Compliance	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Yr Target
Single Person Discount Fraud	£529,263	£942,485	£1,290,452	£1,455,793	£500,000
Local Council Tax Support	£6,050	£20,001	£63,272	£87,093	£150,000
Tenancy Fraud	£6,480	£105,960	£295,200	£295,200	£400,000
Other (Council Tax and NDR)	£113,556	£301,455	£373,578	£495,817	£250,000
Fraud Identified	£655,349	£1,369,901	£2,022,502	£2,333,903	£1,300,000

Business Rates

Business Rates Collection						
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
2020/21	£ 6,046,513	£ 11,935,167	£ 17,330,233	£ 20,092,010	●	
Target	£ 5,351,728	£ 11,332,757	£ 16,430,763	£ 19,979,420		
Refunds	£ 403,258	£ 1,240,252	£ 1,567,290	£ 2,309,912		
2019/20	£ 9,936,479	£ 18,830,045	£ 27,763,428	£ 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.

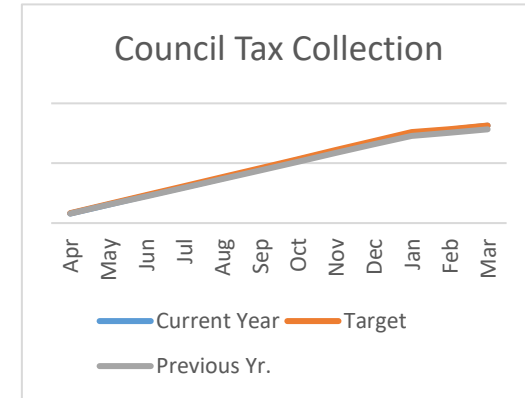
Narrative

Collection met target for the current financial year. Targets were 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 £2,400. Enforcement action in 2021/21 has resulted in collection of £25,721.

Council Tax

Council Tax Collection						
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
2020/21	£ 22,830,485	£ 44,806,050	£ 67,828,605	£ 81,338,654	●	
Target	£ 23,306,834	£ 45,717,564	£ 68,527,467	£ 81,463,941		
Refunds	£ 204,527	£ 489,303	£ 726,141	£ 1,080,745		
2019/20	£ 22,364,957	£ 43,876,573	£ 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 £125,287. 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 were unable to take our normal action to recover outstanding amounts through the Magistrates Court until the last quarter of the year. 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 £73,379. Enforcement action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £491,561.

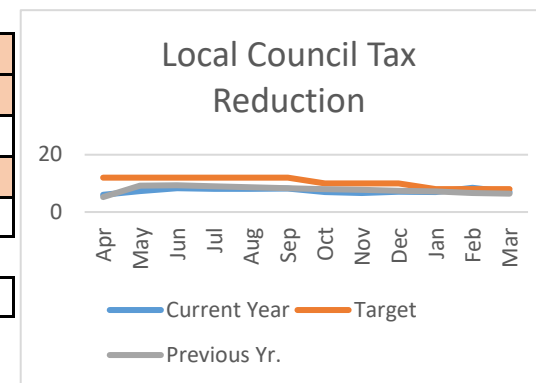
Charging Orders have been obtained to secure £388,654 debt.

Local Council Tax Reduction

Days to process Local Council Tax Support

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
2020/21	8.26	8.20	7.04	6.98	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	9.34	8.26	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.

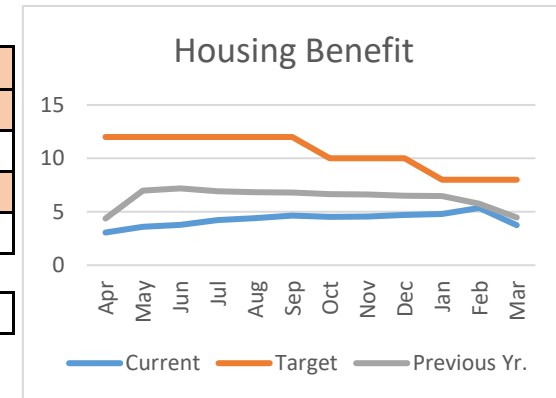
Narrative

This indicator has been met for the year, despite significant increased demand due to the economic impacts of Covid-19 causing rises in Universal Credit claims and change of circumstances.

Housing Benefit

Days to process Housing Benefit					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
2020/21	3.77	4.64	4.72	3.74	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	7.19	6.81	6.50	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 has been met for the year.

Fraud and Compliance

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

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

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

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

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 have also been working with NNDR in post assurance business rates grants and also have investigations underway in respect of false applications.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Single Person Discount Fraud	£117,886	£236,327	£304,536	£326,549
Local Council Tax Support	£1,346	£5,477	£23,403	£35,554
Tenancy Fraud	£0	£0	£93,000	£93,000
Other (Council Tax and NDR)	£53,563	£65,107	£84,089	£105,971
Fraud Identified	£172,794	£306,911	£505,027	£561,074



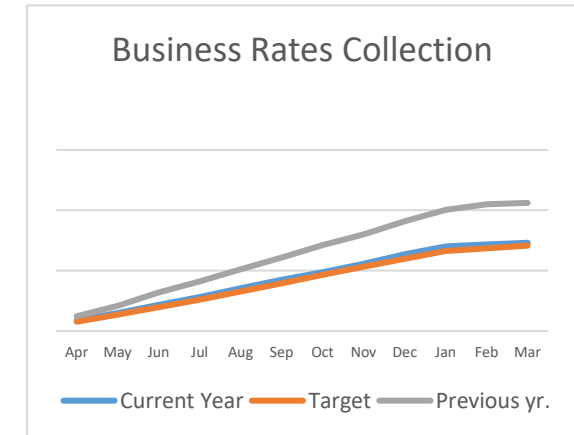
Performance Information March 2021



Business Rates

Business Rates Collection					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
2020/21	£ 4,321,819	£ 8,513,137	£ 12,702,067	£ 14,622,123	●
Target	£ 3,978,590	£ 7,915,784	£ 11,969,953	£ 14,153,152	
Refunds	£ 219,614	£ 429,251	£ 679,549	£ 797,931	
2019/20	£ 6,372,977	£ 12,173,009	£ 18,185,963	£ 21,231,175	●

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 met 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 initially the NHS trusts appealed this decision but this has now been withdrawn.

Further recovery action in 2020/21 has not resulted in any collection. Enforcement action in 20/21 has resulted in collection of £16,008.

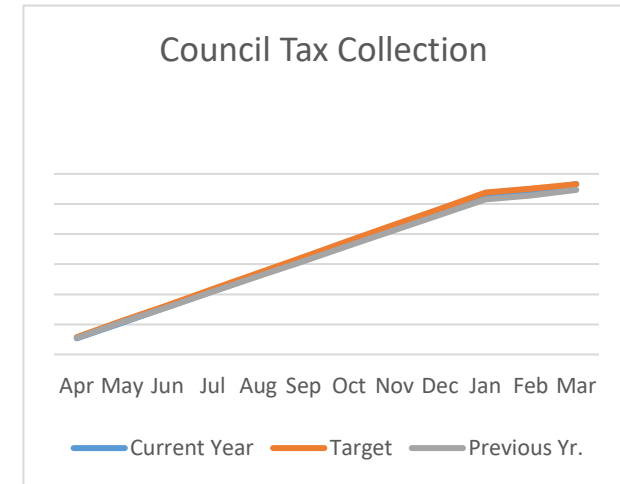


Council Tax



Council Tax Collection					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
2020/21	£ 15,859,812	£ 31,561,919	£ 47,847,998	£ 56,630,706	●
Target	£ 16,420,947	£ 32,428,966	£ 48,431,329	£ 56,565,439	
Refunds	£ 149,975	£ 342,403	£ 522,217	£ 806,345	
2019/20	£ 15,730,723	£ 31,067,215	£ 46,402,469	£ 54,682,384	●

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 met target for the current financial year. 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 were unable to take our normal action to recover outstanding amounts through the Magistrates Court until the last quarter of the year. 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 £33,475. Enforcement action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £237,894.

Charging Orders have been obtained to secure £321,921 debt.

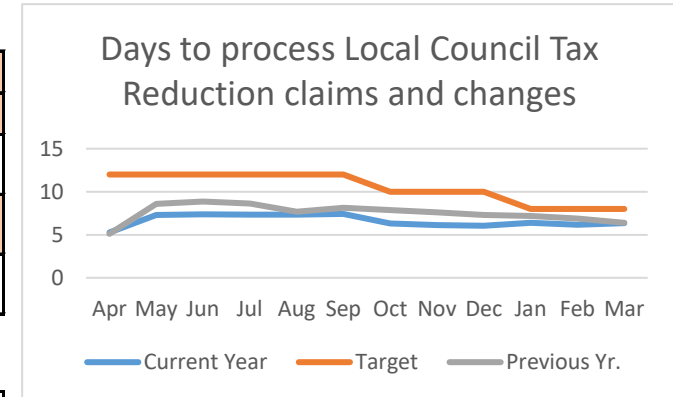


Local Council Tax Reduction



Days to process Local Council Tax Support					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
2020/21	7.37	7.42	6.03	6.36	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	8.86	8.12	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

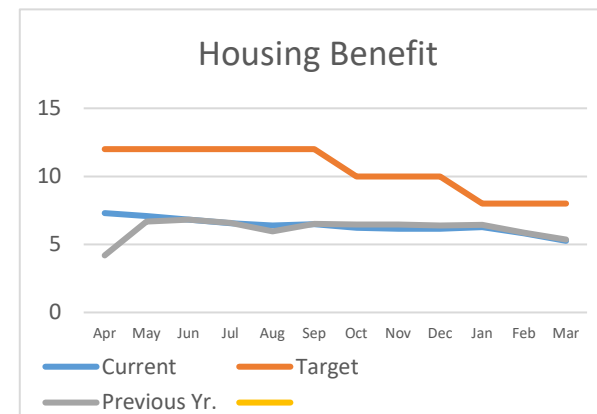
This indicator has been met for the year, despite significant increased demand due to the economic impacts of Covid-19 causing rises in Universal Credit claims and change of circumstances.



Housing Benefit



Days to process Housing Benefit					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
2020/21	6.82	6.48	6.14	5.26	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	6.82	6.50	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 has been met for the year.



Fraud and Compliance



Fraud and Compliance

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

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

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

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

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

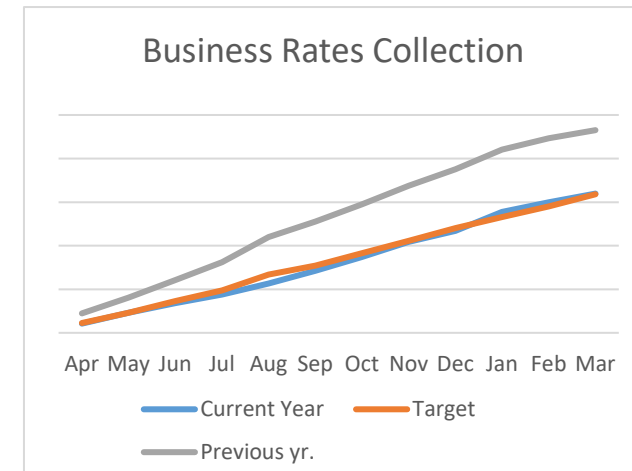
In a broader sense the team are also working with Cambridgeshire County in setting up the Fraud Hub in Cambridgeshire. This is an attempt to match data sets across County to increase Council Tax and Business Rate income. A business case and project team is progressing the Cambridgeshire Fraud Hub and an update is expected in terms of its progression and procurement of software. Once operating this will align the work of the fraud team across the partnership.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Single Person Discount Fraud	£27,997	£40,118	£61,177	£71,898
Local Council Tax Support	£2,122	£2,610	£6,674	£6,711
Tenancy Fraud	£0	£93,000	£186,000	£186,000
Other (Council Tax and NDR)	£0	£101,939	£114,400	£128,452
Fraud Identified	£30,119	£237,667	£368,250	£393,060

Performance Information March 2021

Business Rates

Business Rates Collection					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
2020/21	£ 13,586,679	£ 28,476,749	£ 46,751,882	£ 63,912,082	●
Target	£ 14,599,314	£ 30,783,361	£ 48,034,963	£ 63,596,344	
Refunds	£ 613,691	£ 1,733,063	£ 2,486,253	£ 3,270,590	
2019/20	£ 24,147,964	£ 51,103,221	£ 75,034,979	£ 93,033,039	●
Year End Target		63,596,344		●	



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

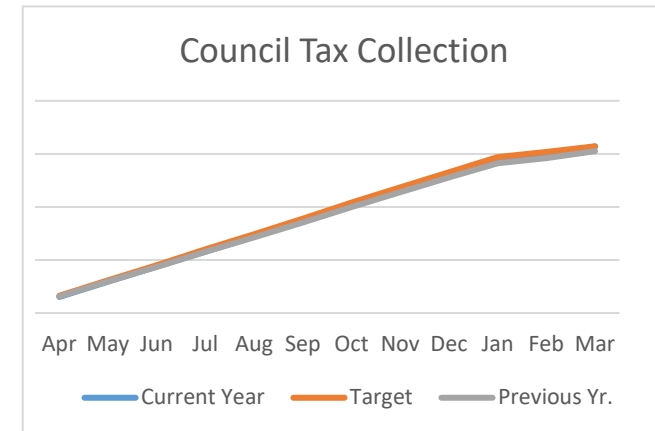
Collection met target for the current financial year. Targets have been amended to reflect the grants which will be received this year in respect of the rate reliefs funded by Government.

Further recovery action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £66,009. Enforcement action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £20,902.

Council Tax

Council Tax Collection					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
2020/21	£ 43,986,884	£ 86,547,244	£ 130,268,131	£ 157,025,532	●
Target	£ 45,144,195	£ 88,858,483	£ 132,855,610	£ 157,132,596	
Refunds	£ 464,206	£ 1,116,190	£ 1,710,530	£ 2,375,415	
2019/20	£ 43,402,134	£ 85,413,139	£ 127,711,105	£ 152,606,485	●

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 £107,065. 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 were only able to start taking our normal action to recover outstanding amounts through the Magistrates Court in the last quarter of the year. 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 £161,995. Enforcement action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £683,893.

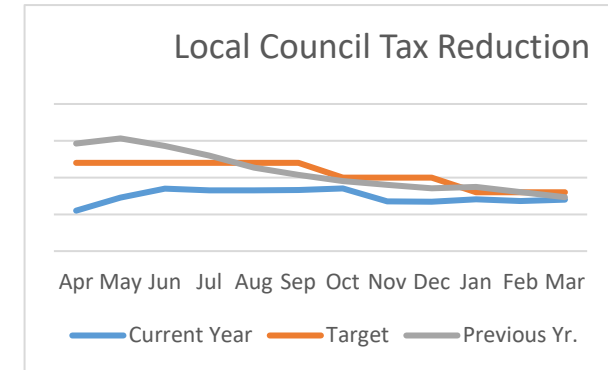


Local Council Tax Reduction



Days to process Local Council Tax Support					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
2020/21	8.49	8.32	6.70	6.98	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	14.29	10.36	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.

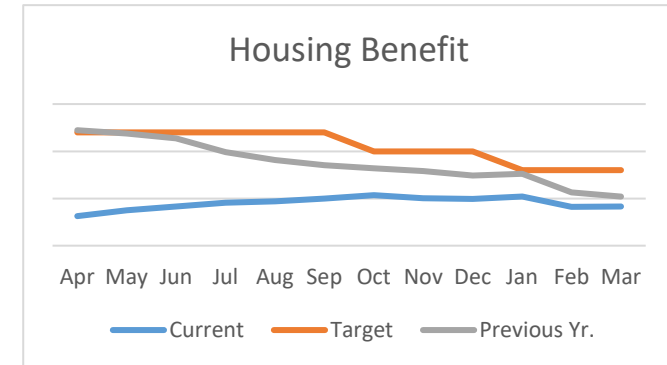
Narrative

This indicator has been met for the year, despite significant increased demand due to the economic impacts of Covid-19 causing rises in Universal Credit claims and change of circumstances.

Housing Benefit

Days to process Housing Benefit					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
2020/21	4.16	4.98	4.95	4.14	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	11.36	8.52	7.42	5.20	●

Year End Target	8	●
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Description

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

Narrative

This indicator has been met for the year.

Fraud and Compliance

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

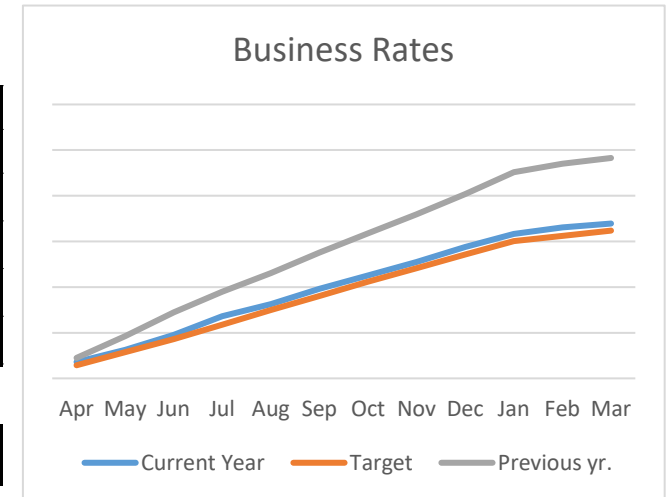
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Single Person Discount Fraud	£191,318	£336,805	£467,765	£537,302
Local Council Tax Support	£254	£2,365	£10,695	£14,814
Tenancy Fraud	£0	£0	£0	£0
Other (Council Tax and NDR)	£6,353	£14,060	£23,574	£90,786
Fraud Identified	£197,925	£353,230	£502,035	£642,901

Performance Information March 2021

Business Rates

Business Rates Collection					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
2020/21	£ 4,752,965	£ 9,815,866	£ 14,405,039	£ 16,956,825	●
Target	£ 4,315,013	£ 9,028,512	£ 13,577,091	£ 16,182,693	
Refunds	£ 380,024	£ 767,676	£ 1,114,748	£ 1,389,525	
2019/20	£ 7,228,152	£ 13,789,980	£ 20,173,070	£ 24,137,938	●

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 met target for the current financial year.

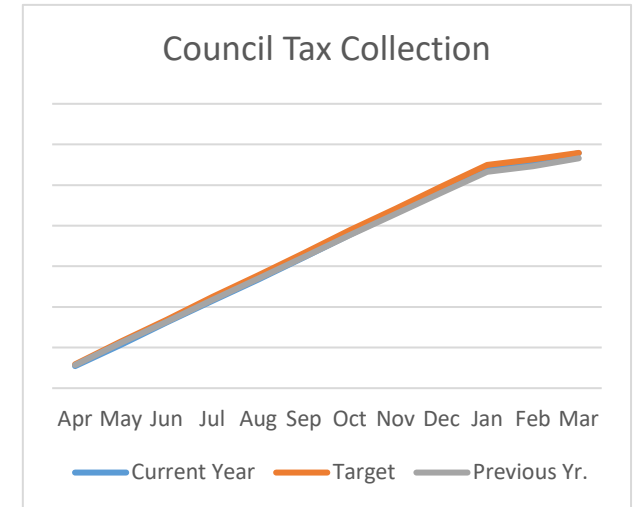
There have been claims by NHS Trusts for charitable rate relief which have been subject to a High Court appeal. If successful this could result in a backdated refund of £553K. The High Court have rejected the claim that the NHS Trusts are charities, however initially the NHS trusts appealed this decision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

Further recovery action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £112,580. Enforcement action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £55,782.

Council Tax

Council Tax Collection					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
2020/21	£ 16,234,901	£ 32,182,036	£ 48,651,700	£ 57,863,955	●
Target	£ 16,835,316	£ 33,271,032	£ 49,631,461	£ 57,913,023	
Refunds	£ 137,534	£ 395,346	£ 613,237	£ 903,450	
2019/20	£ 16,330,949	£ 32,276,827	£ 48,152,964	£ 56,585,399	●

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 £49,068. 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 were only able to take our normal action to recover outstanding amounts through the Magistrates Court in the last quarter of the year. Also, the amount of Council Tax support awarded has increased during the financial year, reducing the amount to be collected.

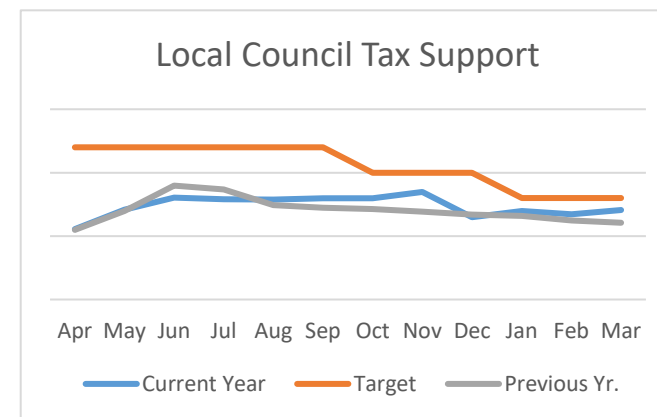
Further recovery action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £70,219. Enforcement action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £336,996.

Charging Orders have been obtained to secure £359,270 debt.

Local Council Tax Reduction

Days to process Local Council Tax Support					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
2020/21	8.03	7.98	6.49	7.06	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	8.98	7.24	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.

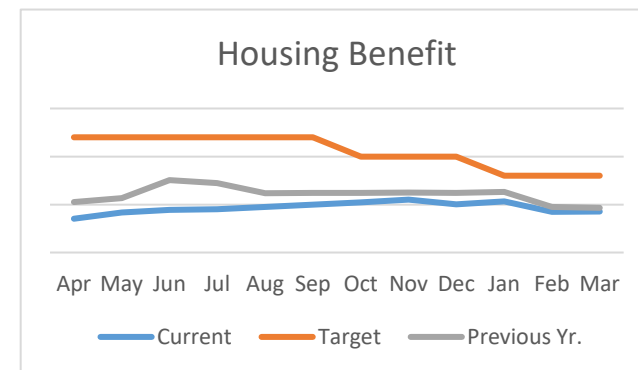
Narrative

This indicator has been met for the year, despite significant increased demand due to the economic impacts of Covid-19 causing rises in Universal Credit claims and change of circumstances.

Housing Benefit

Days to process Housing Benefit					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
2020/21	4.43	4.98	5.01	4.28	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	7.54	6.20	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 has been met for the year.

Fraud and Compliance

Fraud and Compliance

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

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

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

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

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

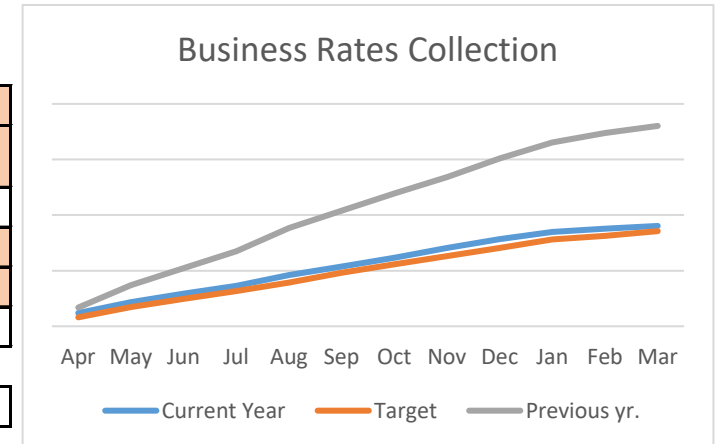
In a broader sense the team are also working with Cambridgeshire County in setting up the Fraud Hub in Cambridgeshire. This is an attempt to match data sets across County to increase Council Tax and Business Rate income. A business case and project team is progressing the Cambridgeshire Fraud Hub. An update is expected in terms of its progression and procurement of software. Once operating this will align the work of the fraud team across the partnership.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Single Person Discount Fraud	£51,619	£99,378	£140,717	£170,563
Local Council Tax Support	£0	£2,145	£2,680	£5,612
Tenancy Fraud	£0	£0	£0	£0
Other (Council Tax and NDR)	£48,463	£93,122	£120,772	£138,631
Fraud Identified	£100,082	£194,644	£264,168	£314,806

Business Rates

Business Rates Collection					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
2020/21	£ 11,674,180	£ 21,493,157	£ 31,404,393	£ 36,097,792	●
Target	£ 9,836,319	£ 19,252,868	£ 28,233,386	£ 34,227,291	
Refunds	£ 887,279	£ 1,617,524	£ 2,212,623	£ 2,860,568	
2019/20	£ 20,840,864	£ 41,582,956	£ 60,433,764	£ 72,085,422	●

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

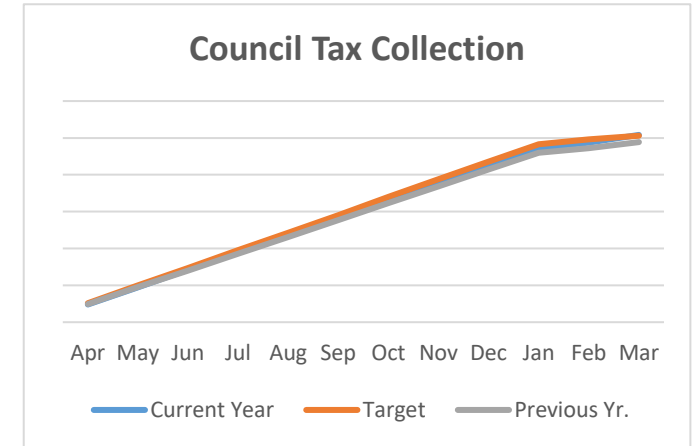
Collection met target for the current financial year.

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 £553K. The High Court have rejected the claim that the NHS Trusts are charities, however initially the NHS trusts appealed this decision but this has now been withdrawn.

Further recovery action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £26,860. Enforcement action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £68,262.

Council Tax Collection					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
2020/21	£ 28,542,242	£ 56,371,002	£ 85,229,464	£ 101,634,429	●
Target	£ 29,393,932	£ 58,180,760	£ 87,139,600	£ 101,183,930	
Refunds	£ 281,783	£ 637,124	£ 1,043,597	£ 1,553,222	
2019/20	£ 27,937,932	£ 55,364,351	£ 82,920,290	£ 97,728,100	●

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 met target. 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 were only able to book a Magistrates Court Hearing to obtain liability orders from January. Also, the amount of Council Tax support awarded has increased during the financial year, reducing the amount to be collected.

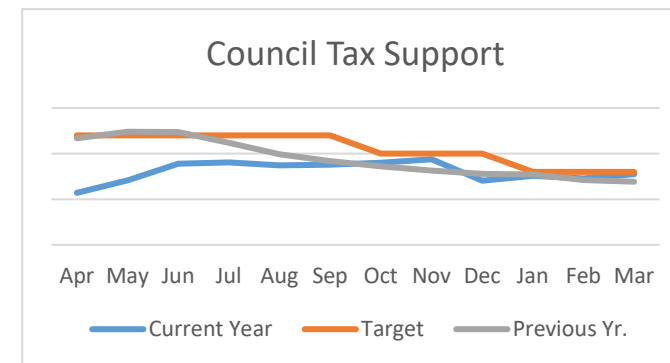
Further recovery action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £114,342. Enforcement action in 2020/21 has resulted in collection of £491,879.

Charging Orders have been obtained to secure £489,920 debt.

Days to process Local Council Tax Support

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
2020/21	8.91	8.79	7.04	7.73	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	12.36	9.18	7.77	6.92	●

Year End Target	8	●
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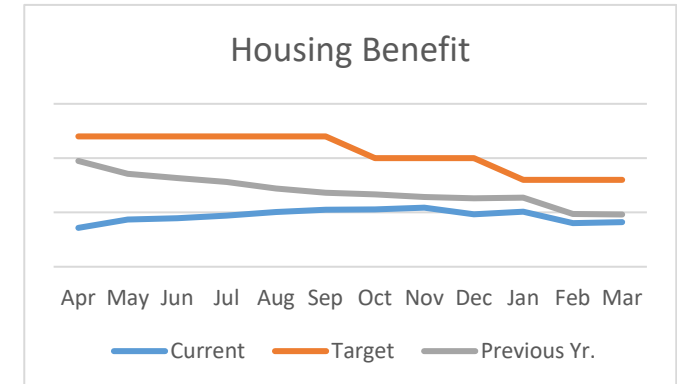
Description

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

Narrative

This indicator has been met for the year, despite significant increased demand due to the economic impacts of Covid-19 causing rises in Universal Credit claims and change of circumstances.

Days to process Housing Benefit					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
2020/21	4.47	5.24	4.82	4.10	●
Target	12	12	10	8	
2019/20	8.16	6.80	6.30	4.81	●
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 has been met for the year.

Fraud and Compliance

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

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

The team work closely with the Housing Option Team and also with Housing Associations to tackle Right to Buy and subletting abuse 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 continue to assist in both pre and post assurance of businesses entitled to the NNDR government business rates grant scheme. The team have been working closely with the Internal Audit team to carry out the assurance work.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Single Person Discount Fraud	£140,444	£229,857	£316,258	£349,482
Local Council Tax Support	£2,327	£7,405	£19,821	£24,402
Tenancy Fraud	£6,480	£12,960	£16,200	£16,200
Other (Council Tax and NDR)	£5,177	£27,227	£30,743	£31,977
Fraud Identified	£154,428	£277,449	£383,022	£422,061

Service Updates as at March 2021



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 reaching normal levels by the end of the financial year. In the recent lockdowns 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. The risk assessment was reviewed at the beginning of January due to the increased in transmission of Covid 19. 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 and we are due to receive our first cases shortly

This year we have collected £3.9M compared to £6.3M 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 £680K in total has been received this financial year compared to £1.37M last year. We have £2.060 M debt secured through Charging Orders.

Funding has been secured from Norfolk & Suffolk County Council for the forthcoming financial year in respect of this work. 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 worked hard to bring the outstanding work down to near normal levels, although with the delayed recovery cycle, continuation of business grants and preparation for the new financial year it was a challenge. Since the annual bills have been issued for the 2021/22 financial year, work levels have increased.

In the budget on 3 March 2021, the Government announced that retail, hospitality & leisure relief would be extended into the 2021/22 financial year but from 1 July 2021 would be reduced to 66%. Rate relief for children's nurseries was similarly extended. We were able to issue the annual bills in time for the 1st instalment on 1 April with full rate relief for those entitled, however we will need to issue revised bills in June 2021 to reduce the rate relief to 66%.

Several businesses have raised appeals with the Valuation Office against their rateable values on the basis that Covid has affected the value. The Government has passed legislation which has meant these reductions cannot be considered and has announced that they will fund further discretionary rate relief to those businesses affected. We await guidance on this matter.

An interim report has been published into the Governments call for evidence on business rates review. We await the outcome in the autumn.

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).

Council Tax

As expected Covid -19 has had an impact on collection, despite the application of the hardship fund payments to accounts. Prior to recommencing Statutory Reminders in August, for customers in arrears with their Council Tax payments, we had offered the option of a two month payment break to provide more flexibility during Covid-19. An online form had 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. We have sent 2 rounds of 'soft reminders' which have had a positive effect on collection. This was in addition to updating our website and phone message to provide help and support to those struggling to pay through this difficult time and we continue to signpost customers to claim Universal Credit and Council Tax Support.

The Magistrates Courts reopened at the end of last year and have stayed open during the latest lockdown; we have Court hearings booked for all Authorities.

Demand for council tax billing has been significantly greater than last year, with the lockdowns causing increased demand as a direct result of the pandemic. We are also seeing increased demand attributed to a combination of recommencing statutory reminders, increases in Universal Credit data share, significant numbers of house moves as people seek to take advantage of the stamp duty holiday and low interest rates, as well as the impact of the Track and Trace Self Isolation payment scheme. Despite the team completing 17.5% more documents this year compared to last year, outstanding work has been below the highest levels it reached the previous year.

Further, the project to introduce the generic Council Tax Billing Officer role, which provides a resilient team who have been able to switch between billing and benefits to help cope with ever changing workloads and priorities during the pandemic, has provided increased flexibility to the use of our resources.

A new statutory provision called "Breathing space" is being introduced on 4 May 2021. This gives debtors a 60 day moratorium from recovery action for their debts. Preparations are being made to our processes and systems to ensure we can comply with the new legislation.

Benefits

Both Council Tax Support and Benefits performance has achieved targets, despite the increased demand attributed to COVID-19.

Throughout the year we have seen significant increases in claims with throughput approximately increased by a third on 2019/2020. In April 2020 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 our software system and are automatically processed. We have received an average of just under 4000 UCDS records weekly from the DWP and we fully automating 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 for the consultation. This in turn has reduced the number of Council Tax adjustment notices, contact and refund requests and allows customers to more flexibility to manage their payments.

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 have continued to award a payment to every entitled new working age Council Tax Support customer who made an claim throughout the year and have closely monitored expenditure to ensure the fund for each Council has not been overspent.

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 and devise local schemes. Whilst DHSC fund the programme, we have see demand outstrip the forecast volumes, especially with the substantial increase in positive cases seen over Winter, linked to the third national lockdown, although demand reduced towards the very end of the year as Coronavirus numbers decreased. The scheme has now been extended by three months to 30th June 2021 and now includes provision for parents of school age children required to self-isolate to apply for a payment.

ARP Systems and Digital

System admin have recently completed Annual billing process for 21/21, the team worked exceptionally hard this year to adapt to the changes required at short notice for Covid-19. Interpreting the changes whilst ensuring bills were issued in a timely manner was paramount. In particular I would like to highlight the work undertaken for NDR following budget announcement on a Wednesday and processing the billing on the Saturday and Sunday. Information from management was clear and decisive in course of action and the commitment from both system admin and NDR Billing team was excellent.

The team also made late amendments to the CTS hardship payments for 21/22 where excess allowance was available, again I have to credit the combined effort across the partnership to achieve this.

Track and trace forms required regular amendments which required flexibility from team during Annual billing process.

Looking forward we are continuing to carry out reviews with Capita on portal and form developments and implementing Change of Address automation.

Fraud and Compliance

The Fraud Team having had a successful prosecution regarding tenancy fraud continue to work with social housing providers in an attempt to expand the commercial aspect of their investigation service.

With new restrictions in place by Central Government and with the increased cases of Covid-19 infections the fraud team have reviewed 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 the business case to extend the Fraud and Compliance work for the two partners. If approved this would align the Fraud and Compliance work currently being carried out for other partners of the Anglia Revenues Partnership as indicated in the fraud savings on the quarterly performance report. This work has 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. An imminent update is expected with regards to the project. Norfolk County Council and now Suffolk County Council have committed to continue providing funding until March 2022. 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 2020/2021 Breckland Council Premium matches continue to be above expectation.

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. A number of sanctions have now been conducted using this process.

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

The Customer Strategy Team (CST) restarted meetings in August 2020 after a pandemic-related hiatus, and since then has completed a gap analysis. First and foremost, this showed there was a gap between the information we hold about service delivery, and how consolidated and easily accessible that information is to the wider team. CST is helping to make the partnership's performance framework even more focused on customer delivery; from these metrics CST will be able to prioritise change projects it wants to sponsor within the revenues and benefits partnership. CST also proposed a new remit (approved by OIB in October 2020) which mandated that it is now the central point of reference for any proposal or project that affects or seeks to change the way customers interact with the shared revenues and benefits service.

In Q4, as a subset of that performance framework evaluation, CST began to scrutinise the existing reporting on 'online metrics', as well as what's proposed within the performance framework. CST's focus is on making sure that as well as bald sign-up rates, we monitor the quality and retention of our self-service channels.