

## ANGLIA REVENUES PARTNERSHIP

**Report of** Paul Corney - Head of ARP

**To:** ARP Joint Committee, 22 June 2021

**Subject:** The Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP) Service Delivery Plan and Risk Register.

**Purpose:** To Provide an update concerning the Service Delivery Plan and Risk Register at Appendix A

### Recommendation(s):

- That the progress in respect of the December 2020 Service Delivery Plan and the risk register is noted.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 In accordance with the ARP agreement a revised Service Delivery Plan with risk register should be agreed by the Joint Committee by the end of December each year and then reviewed every 6 months.
- 1.1.2 A Service Delivery Plan was agreed in December 2020 and this report provides an update below which details progress against this plan and an update to the risk register.

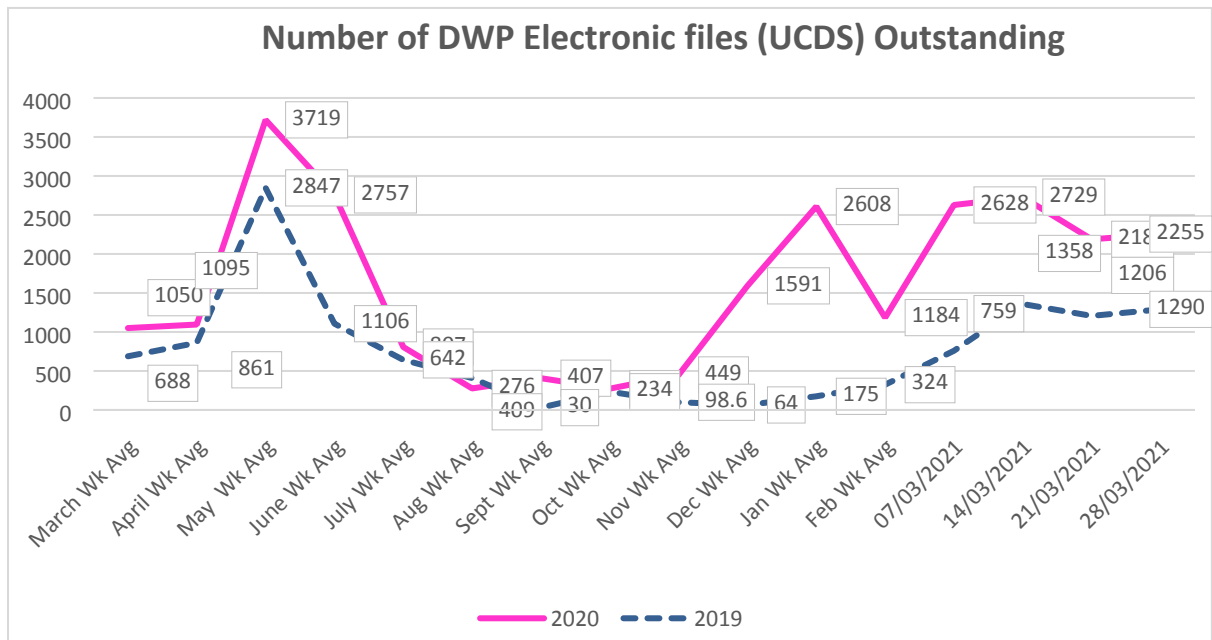
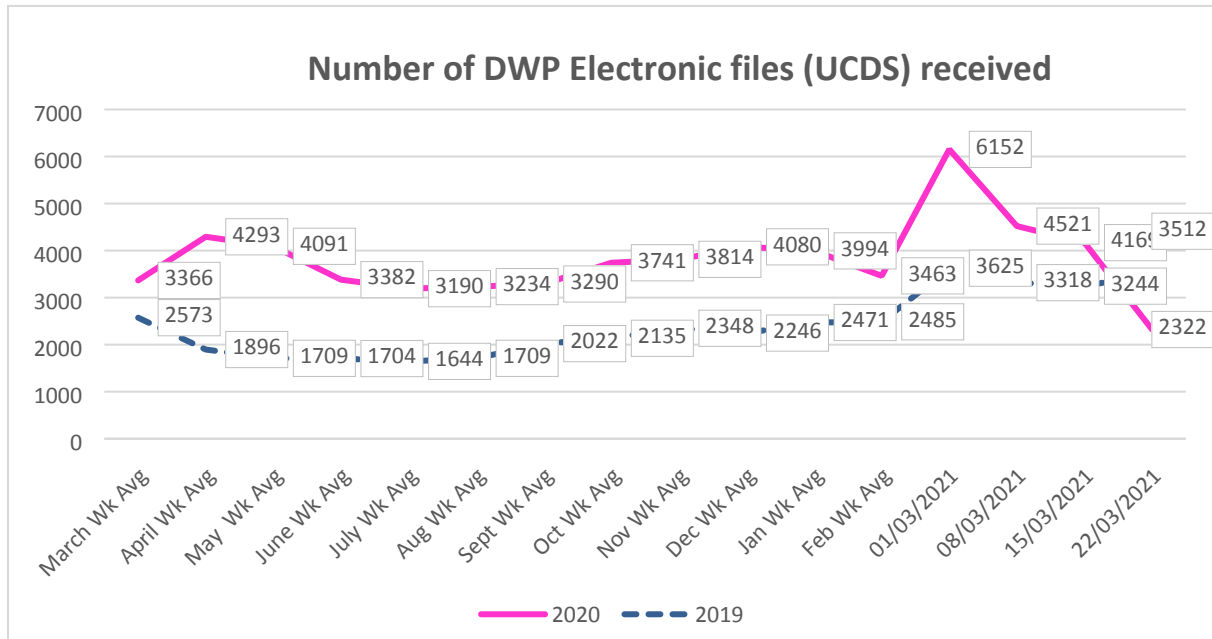
## 2. December 2020/21 plan update

- 2.1 The ARP are seeing significant success in 2020/21 and we have achieved the following;
- Housing Benefit new claims and changes are meeting targets in 21/22 even though Covid has affected levels of work and enquiries
  - The suite of forms and other functionality is available to all customer teams using Capita customer contact software to sign customers up to e-services and the number of those using e-services continues to rise.
  - The further recovery work jointly funded by County Councils secured recovery of £680k even though covid led to suspension of courts which has reduced the recovery in 2020/21, the achievement is commendable considering the circumstances. Recovery in 2021/22 is expected to reach the levels seen in previous years
  - The Fraud teams work, also jointly funded by the County Councils, identified over £2.3 Million in fraud and error last year even with the restrictions caused by Covid. The team are on target to achieve similar values in 21/22.

Some other achievements relating to the Transformation Programme are detailed below:

- 2.2 The Digital work stream has progressed with the automation of new claims and changes in circumstances growing steadily, to such a degree that when we saw the significant increase in Universal Credit Data Service reports of changes in circumstances we were able to automate approximately 50% resulting in less build up in work outstanding and therefore a quicker response for customers.

## UCDS received and outstanding



- 2.3 Automation of Universal Credit records also includes the introduction of the “Tolerance Rule” into our Council Tax Support Schemes last year, this has meant that approximately one 3<sup>rd</sup> of the changes in income received did not result in a revised bill and payment profile for our customers leading to a clearer picture of what they have to pay. We did not have any cases where we need to reassess due to the tolerance rule causing hardship in cases where income reduced.
- 2.4 With the increase in unemployment and the continuing migration of cases from legacy benefits we are expecting the increase in UCDS cases to continue and so increasing levels of automation continues to be a priority
- 2.5 Our next steps in UCDS automation are, to increase automation in respect of changes in circumstances and, to automate new claims. We received the upgrade in software to facilitate this work in April 2021.
- 2.6 East Suffolk and West Suffolk are passing parking cases to our ARP enforcement services (previously known as Bailiff). This increases the teams resilience and ability to

collect debt in a fair manner taking account of people's ability to pay and vulnerability. It will also mean that the fees generated from enforcement action will come to the partners.

- 2.7 With Self-isolation Payments introduced and business grants being offered in the second lockdown in place in November we still seeing additional pressure on the teams. However, the partnership working between teams across all councils and the ARP Teams has worked fantastically and it should be a priority, when the current crisis ends, to ensure that we continue to work as closely in future.
- 2.8 Appendix A attached to the report shows the status of the priorities agreed in December 2020 and as can be seen the actions are progressing as we have anticipated, it is commendable that the pressures of covid are not affecting progress in 2020/21.
- 2.9 Two key members of the Senior Management Team have retired and as previously agreed the Head of NNDR, Recovery and Enforcement is being appointed to. Work continues to ensure that members of the ARP team are offered opportunities to develop the skills they need to progress. This of course benefits the partners in establishing resilience and future strength in potential succession.
- 2.10 Work with the Customer Strategy Group continues to drive performance and will seek to develop customer satisfaction data in the future. The Customer Journey Programme will seek to improve the online access for customers by seeking to make links between websites as seamless as possible.
- 2.11 We are also looking to review the Council Tax Support Schemes for the Councils. We are endeavouring to continue to remove the need for customers to provide us with data already provided to DWP in support of Universal Credit claims. This approach will also improve the potential levels of automation meaning that customers claims are resolved more quickly.
- 2.12 The draft budget for 2021/22 is lower than it was in 20/21 even after the 2.75% increase in salaries; due to the savings in salaries and in the increased income from bailiff work now that the enforcement team will collect parking debts for East and West Suffolk.

### 3. Updated Service Delivery Plan and Risk Register

- 3.1 The service Delivery Plan (Appendix A) details the high-level actions that the service must implement to ensure that the varied demands on the service are met. The plan has 2 areas:
  - Service plan – business as usual and innovative activities
  - Risk register
- 3.2 The Joint Committee has reconsidered the strategic direction of the ARP going forward and the Service Delivery Plan seeks to detail actions to achieve the visioning detailed in the report to members.
- 3.3 The priorities of the Revenues and Benefits service are:

**“Colleagues”**: Our operations rely on the people who make up our team, both directly within the partnership and in partner service areas. We will develop our people professionally and pursue a comprehensive organisational development plan.

**“Customers”**: We focus all of our work on supporting the families, communities, individuals and businesses located in our partnership area. We will continue to make our services as convenient and as accessible as possible.

**“Digital”**: We will aim to increase our ‘digital by default’ service including full self-service. We will use automation to speed processing and release our teams to focus on vulnerable and complex cases.

**“Relationships”**: We are a partnership of five district councils, pooling resources to share the provision of revenues and benefits services, offering greater returns on investment in change and innovation projects.

**“Sustainability”**: We are organisationally designed to improve the financial sustainability and self-sufficiency of our partners, through the collection of council tax and business rates and the ethical recovery and enforcement of related debts.

- 3.4 All partner Councils strategies include the development of digital online solutions. Self-service offers customers accessible services inside and outside of opening hours, it also means that the customer service teams are available to provide more help to those who cannot self-serve or need to speak to a specialist.
- 3.5 The offer of online facilities to customers able to self-serve also frees existing resource to help those unable to self-serve. The development of the online portal, forms and automation will continue to be a priority.
- 3.6 The Customer Strategic Team (the lead officer from each Councils customer services team and ARP officers) will continue to improve the access customers have to services and will continue to improve the interface between front and back office functions.
- 3.7 In 2021/22 we will continue to invest time and resource into developing automated processes which have already delivered savings of over £120k. In addition, a further £220k efficiency target is included in the budget from 2022/23 onwards.
- 3.8 The ARP strategic team will continue to influence national initiatives such as Universal Credit and to influence system design to improve performance and generate efficiencies where possible.
- 3.9 The risk register also continues to highlight the need to monitor the impact of Universal Credit on customers and grant income. We continue to influence changes in delivery through representation on DWP steering groups.
- 3.10 All elements in the risk register have reached their target scores; The appeal from Hospitals for business Rate relief has been withdrawn, and the impact of Covid is being managed and all staff are able to work remotely.

## **4 Options**

1. To suggest changes and additions to the Service Delivery Plan and Risk Register.
2. To note Service Delivery Plan and Risk Register at Appendix A.

## **5 Reasons for recommendations**

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

## **6 IMPLICATIONS**

### **6.1 Risk**

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

### **6.2 Financial**

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

### **6.3 Legal**

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

### **6.4 Equality and Diversity**

Not applicable.

Background papers:- None

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#### **Appendices attached to this report:**

**Appendix A – Service Delivery Plan December 2020 – updated June 2021**