

Cabinet



Forest Heath

District Council

Title of Report:	Report of the Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership Joint Committee: 17 September 2015	
Report No:	CAB/FH/15/049	
Report to and date:	Cabinet	27 October 2015
Portfolio holder:	Stephen Edwards Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance Tel: 01638 660518 Email: stephen.edwards@westsuffolk.gov.uk	
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Purpose of report:	On 17 September 2015 the Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership (ARP) Joint Committee considered the following substantive items of business: (1) Performance Report; (2) Moving to a Single Member Joint Committee; (3) Welfare Reform Update; (4) Enforcement Agency Update; and (5) Forthcoming Issues. This report is for information only. No decisions are required by the Cabinet.	
Recommendation:	The Cabinet is requested to <u>NOTE</u> the content of Report No: CAB/FH/15/049 being the report of the Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership Joint Committee, including the decision taken under delegated authority, as detailed in Section 1.2, with regard to Moving to a Single Member Joint Committee.	
Key Decision: (Check the appropriate box and delete all those that do not apply.)	Is this a Key Decision and, if so, under which definition? Yes, it is a Key Decision - <input type="checkbox"/> No, it is not a Key Decision - <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Consultation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See reports of ARP Joint Committee at link provided under 'Background papers'
Alternative option(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See reports of ARP Joint Committee at link provided under 'Background papers'
Implications:	
Are there any financial implications? <i>If yes, please give details</i>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See reports of ARP Joint Committee at link provided under 'Background papers'
Are there any staffing implications? <i>If yes, please give details</i>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See reports of ARP Joint Committee at link provided under 'Background papers'
Are there any ICT implications? <i>If yes, please give details</i>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See reports of ARP Joint Committee at link provided under 'Background papers'
Are there any legal and/or policy implications? <i>If yes, please give details</i>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See reports of ARP Joint Committee at link provided under 'Background papers'
Are there any equality implications? <i>If yes, please give details</i>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See reports of ARP Joint Committee at link provided under 'Background papers'
Risk/opportunity assessment: See reports of ARP Joint Committee at link provided under 'Background papers'	<i>(potential hazards or opportunities affecting corporate, service or project objectives)</i>
Ward(s) affected:	All Ward/s
Background papers: <i>(all background papers are to be published on the website and a link included)</i>	Breckland DC Website: Reports of the Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership Joint Committee – 17 September 2015
Documents attached:	None

1. Key issues

1.1 Performance Report (Agenda Item 5)

1.1.1 The Joint Committee had received and noted the Operational Performance Report as at 31 July 2015. The report details ARP's key achievements in respect of Benefits News; Council Tax News; NDR news; HBOP News; Performance Targets; Projects; Learning and Support; Website and Imaging System (EDMS). This detailed report can be viewed on Breckland District Council's website at:

<http://democracy.breckland.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Mid=3456&x=1>

1.1.2 Members had noted that targets had been met by all partner authorities with all indicators annotated green as at 31 July 2015, as shown on the Balanced Scorecard at:

<http://democracy.breckland.gov.uk/documents/s36124/ARP%20Balanced%20scorecard%202015-16%20-%20July%202015%20FINAL.pdf>

1.1.3 The above report provides further information on indicators relevant to each partner authority, which are grouped under the following headings:

- (a) Financial: Collection, Budget Management
- (b) Customer: Customer Satisfaction, Channel Shift
- (c) Internal Process: Collection, Fraud
- (d) Learning and Growth: Performance Management

1.1.4 In respect of financial performance as at 31 August 2015, the Joint Committee noted that there was currently an underspend of £41,923 against budget, which was attributed to high turnover in staff during the first quarter of 2015/2016.

1.1.5 A detailed discussion had been held on the ARP Fraud Team's successful investigations and their relationship with the Single Fraud Investigation Service.

1.2 Moving to a Single Member Joint Committee

1.2.1 Members had considered a report which sought approval for changes to the membership arrangements for the Joint Committee.

1.2.2 As the partnership had expanded to seven this had impacted on the membership for the Joint Committee, which under the current arrangements enabled a total of 14 Members (plus substitute Members) to sit on the Joint Committee. It was therefore considered that to avoid the potential negative effect on performance often associated with committees/boards of ten members or more, whether the Joint Committee should move to an arrangement of a single Member and two substitutes per authority, with the option for one of the substitutes to attend and take part in debate (but not vote). It was also considered whether paired councils (those formally sharing services) should choose to send only one Member to meetings who could cast a vote for each council.

1.2.3 Members considered this was a pragmatic approach regarding the future governance of the Joint Committee; however it was considered that although some partners were formally sharing services, each council should continue to have separate votes.

1.2.4 The Joint Committee **recommended to the Partnering Authorities:**

That the Joint Committee moves to a single Member and two substitutes per authority, with the option for one of the substitutes to attend and take part in debate (but not vote).

1.2.5 On 28 May 2015, during consideration of the 'Annual Review of Cabinet Working Parties, Joint Committees/Panels and Other Groups: 2015/2016' report (Report No: CAB/SE/15/032 refers), the Cabinet resolved that:

'...the potential requirement to only have one full Member representative from each of the Councils represented on the Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership Joint Committee, as set out in Section 1.5.2 of Report No: CAB/SE/15/032, be noted. Any required changes to the Council's representation on the Joint Committee be delegated to the Service Manager (Legal) and the Leader of the Council to action accordingly.'

1.2.6 As delegated authority has already been granted to make changes to the Council's representation on the Joint Committee, there is no requirement to seek separate approval of the recommendation provided in 1.2.4 above. The equivalent was also resolved by Forest Heath District Council's (FHDC) Cabinet on 2 June 2015 and therefore action will be taken to implement the changes to the membership from the Borough Council and FHDC before the Joint Committee's next meeting in December 2015, in accordance with the resolution provided in 1.2.5 above.

1.3 **Welfare Reform Update (Agenda Item 7)**

1.3.1 The Joint Committee had received and noted a verbal update on welfare reform.

1.3.2 The update included information on:

- (a) the impact following the introduction of Universal Credit to five of the partnering authorities;
- (b) Pension Housing Benefit migration; and
- (c) changes as a result of the Budget announcements in July 2015.

1.4 **Enforcement Agency Update (Agenda Item 8)**

1.4.1 The Joint Committee had received and noted a verbal update on the recently established ARP Enforcement Agency.

1.4.2 The update included information on:

- (a) the operation of the Enforcement Team since June 2015 following the appointments of a Manager and Compliance Team;
- (b) the rolling-out of intensive training to enable the Compliance Team to gain certification, which will allow them to make home visits;
- (c) that since the first letters had been issued in July 2015, £125,000 had been successfully collected and arrangements were being made to collect further outstanding debt; and
- (d) performance statistics will be produced to enable comparisons to be made against the private companies previously appointed for debt collection.

1.4.3 The Joint Committee was pleased to note the performance to date and how the concept of having its own Enforcement Agency was proving successful. Given that there will be a possibility of commissioning the service to other providers during 2016, Members and officers were encouraged to promote the service.

1.5 **Forthcoming Issues (Agenda Item 9)**

1.5.1 The Joint Committee had been informed that the Service Delivery Plan and Risk Management report would be presented to the next meeting.

1.5.2 As she would soon be leaving the organisation to take up the post of Chief Executive for East Hertfordshire District Council, the work of the Director for the West Suffolk councils was formally acknowledged and commended.