

BRECKLAND COUNCIL
EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
EAST SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL
FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL
WEST SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

ANGLIA REVENUES & BENEFITS JOINT COMMITTEE

**Held on Tuesday, 3 December 2024 at 10.00 am in the
The Innovation Centre, Croxton Road, Thetford. IP24 1JD**

PRESENT

Cllr Diane Hind (Chairman) (West Suffolk DC)	Cllr Jan French (Fenland DC)
Cllr Philip Cowen (Vice- Chairman) (BDC)	Cllr Keith Horgan (East Cambs DC)
Cllr Paul Ashton (East Suffolk DC)	

In Attendance

Lorraine King	- Head of ARP
Theresa Mann	- Principal Billing, Benefits and Business Rates Manager (ARP)
Katey Mills	- Principal Fraud, Enforcement and Recovery Manager (ARP)
Catherine Monument	- Principal Partnership Support Manager
Sam Anthony	- Head of HR & OD (Fenland)
Alison Chubbock	- Section 151 Officer & Assistant Director Finance
Ian Smith	- Director, Finance (East Cambs)
Marie McKissock	- Deputy Finance Officer (East Suffolk)
Tanya Sturman	- Service Manager Customer and Digital
Julie Britton	- Democratic Services Officer

34/24 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3 September 2024 were agreed as a correct record.

35/24 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Rachal Mann (West Suffolk DC) and Lorraine Rogers (East Suffolk DC).

Substitutes in attendance were Tanya Sturman and Marie McKissock.

36/24 URGENT BUSINESS

None.

37/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None declared.

Action By

Action By

38/24 PERFORMANCE REPORT (STANDING ITEM)

Theresa Mann, the Principal Benefits and Council Tax Billing Manager and Katey Mills, the Principal Fraud & Enforcement Manager presented the report that detailed all partner authority's performance for quarter 2 this year.

Details of the combined performance, as outlined on page 10 of the agenda pack, was provided followed by an update in respect of all areas.

Both Business Rates and Council Tax collection were above target in quarter 2 and was significantly above where collection rates were at this same point last year.

The number of electronic forms received in quarter 2 had increased by 21,000 since last year – with over 61k electronic forms being received.

Over £3.25m of fraud and error had been identified in quarter 2.

Enforcement

Quarter 2 had seen an increase of overall debt collection – 14.26% up from 9.81% at the end of quarter 1. Collection rates were up 21% compared to 2023/2024 and an increase of 20% of fees collected compared with the same period last year.

The Team continued to actively use Tel Solutions to increase customer engagement at the compliance stage of the enforcement process. The use of other communication methods had also had a positive impact on the number of letters being sent in the post. The Team also continued to explore other options for online customer engagement by way of online forms and the potential use of an online portal.

Fraud

To the end of quarter 2, the Team had identified fraud an error to the value of over £3.25 million. Several prosecutions had been concluded with custodial sentences seen in two cases. 11 cases were in the court system. The Team had 46 live criminal investigations ongoing for ARP partners.

Success continued in respect of the Team's single person discount work. Tel solutions was being implemented in respect of this work stream. A high-level fraud service continued to be provided to ARP's external partners and two housing associations.

Further Recovery

This small Team continued to perform well with their quarter 2 collection totalling just shy of £1.5 million. At the end of November, the Team surpassed the £1.8 million collected in 2023/2024 with the total now at £1.985 million.

Council Tax

At the end of quarter 2 Council Tax collection for all local authorities was on target apart from East Cambridgeshire District Council. Council Tax collection was closely monitored throughout the year.

Council Tax billing work levels remained high, and focus continued to improve performance.

Work on automation continued, with refund automation and change of

Action By

address automation results improving.

Use of the new and improved Contact Us form had continued to increase, which had improved efficiency and auto indexing. To support this, the council tax mailbox had been closed at the end of September.

The paperless billing campaign was launched and automated messaging was utilised to increase e-billing sign up and for council tax reminders and reviews.

Benefits

At the end of Quarter two, the targets for processing times in terms of Local Council Tax Support had not met due to an increase in claims received for UC migration; however, some improvement was now being seen due to changes in work allocation and resources.

Days to process Housing Benefit claims did not meet targets by the end of the second quarter, however as a result of changes to workload an improvement in performance was now being seen for all local authorities moving into Quarter three.

Automation successfully continued, with 97% of Universal Credit notifications from the DWP being successfully automated.

Universal Credit continued to be rolled out, and the migration of ESA claimants had been brought forward to 2025.

Work continued with the Communities Teams, referring customers who might need financial/welfare advice.

A planned campaign to contact customers who might be eligible to reclaim CTR was taking place using ARP's automated messaging supplier.

The use of our Contact Us form continued to be expanded, and in June 2024, the benefits email inbox had been closed, directing customers to use the form instead.

Business Rates

Collection rates across all councils were above the targets at the end of quarter 2. The work position was improving, and a focus continued on clearing historic credits and recovering old arrears.

Staffing changes included a new resilience Officer who would be starting soon and a new NDR manager had just been appointed to start in January 2025.

Lorraine King, the Head of ARP, then provided Members with an update on ARP Systems and Digital and the Better Customer Experience Programme.

ARP Systems and Digital

Work progresses on E-Billing with around 12% of Council Tax bills and 6% Business Rates bills being sent electronically. The bills were sent by email via PDF attachments which had lessened the contact from customers compared to the previous method where they were required to log into a portal.

Action By

In October it was planned to contact customers and businesses where an email address was held for them to encourage sign up. Social media campaigns across the partnership were also being undertaken and had been booked as well as telephone campaigns for all Customer Service Teams.

Work progresses on Capita forms predominantly Council Tax Change of Address form which had been extended to tenant moves this month for East Cambridgeshire DC. This would be rolled out to other authorities during October and automation rates was had increased to over 60%. Other forms being worked on included Arrangement Manager and Council Tax Refunds.

The Data Retention Policy had been agreed. All ARP staff had confirmed that they had reviewed their own personal files to ensure customer information was retained in the correct secure areas.

The Contact Us form had been worked on to facilitate the move away from receiving customer emails to receiving information on Contact Us. The main Benefit email and Housing Benefit Overpayment email address had been switched off.

Better Customer Experience Programme

The use of the Contact Us form by customers had risen sharply as the channel shifted away from incoming emails to the form. The email mailbox had been switched off for Benefits and Housing Benefit Overpayments.

Work progressed on the Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates mailbox in tray, with outgoing correspondence being updated. Over 11,584 online forms had been received in September with 80% automatically indexed.

The new Contact Us form linked into the online forms, encouraging their use and maximising the opportunity to automate.

The use of Telsolutions, an automated telephone, text and email messaging service continued to be expanded, with the majority of enforcement notifications now being sent by email or text and automated emails and text messages being used to encourage paperless billing take up next month.

The Telephony Project was nearing completion although some enhancements to improve the reporting functionality and transfer of calls were still awaited.

Members were informed that social media campaigns were booked to take place across the partnership as well as telephone campaigns for all Customer Service Teams.

Councillor Horgan referred to the Council Tax collection rates for East Cambridgeshire DC and asked the Head of ARP if she could put any light on the matter as to why it was so behind target as it suggested in the narrative that this figure could be incorrect.

The Head of ARP explained that the Team was trying to get to the bottom of this as there were several factors that could have an impact on its collections rates including some monies received last year rather than this year, higher refunds and lower write-offs. She assured Councillor Horgan that the percentage collected was quite similar for each partner.

Action By

Ian Smith, the Director of Finance (East Cambs), highlighted the fact that there had been much more house building in the district the previous year compared to this year, so fewer properties built, and this could be one of the areas that had affected the target.

Councillor French was concerned about the length of time that new homes took to be council tax banded and asked when they were banded was it backdated.

The Head of ARP said it was backdated and would be applied from when the resident moved into the property, and the Team had a good idea of what the band would be.

The Principal Billing, Benefits and Council Tax Billing Manager explained that the Valuation Agency was chased, and although there was a delay, the residents were able to make payments in advance.

The Chairman, Councillor Hind, asked if the purchaser of the property was told what the Council Tax band would be and how did ARP know when the person had moved in.

The Principal Fraud & Enforcement Manager explained that ARP received notification from Building Control and on occasion, an Officer might visit the occupier of the property.

Councillor French was concerned that not everyone used Building Control, if the property was not a new build.

Members were assured that planning applications were also monitored as well as using other various means, the Team was very proactive.

Tanya Sturman, Service Manager, Customer & Digital (West Suffolk District Council) pointed out that there was also the street naming and numbering process as well as when the occupiers ordered a bin.

Councillor Ashton felt that the process seemed to be getting longer.

The Head of ARP advised that at the end of Quarter 2, ARP was further ahead with Council Tax this year compared to last year. Regarding Benefits processing times an increase in work items such as migration to Universal Credit had been seen and the stopping of housing benefit but as Quarter 3 approached, the Team was very close to target and was now out of that dip. These improvements were very much due to further automation, constantly reviewing the allocation of work, ARP Focus Days, working smarter and changes to phone rotas etc.

The Chairman had noted that ARP had been selected to be a pilot for DWP and HMRC and asked if this was in terms of access to debt recovery.

The Principal Fraud & Enforcement Manager confirmed that this was for debt recovery. HMRC data was very useful but unfortunately in the second round of the pilot scheme HMRC had reduced the amount of data available.

Members were informed that ARP was not sure why HMRC were very protective of their data, as the first pilot had been very positive unlike the

Action By

second pilot, but it was hoped that HMRC would revert back to their original agreement.

The Chairman had also noted mostly clerical errors in terms of business rates and write-offs recently and wondered if system improvements and further training would rectify these errors, and if there was confidence and some satisfaction that with these new systems in place there would be less of these incidences.

The Principal Benefits and Council Tax Billing Manager assured Members that robust procedures had now been put in place to make sure that any large debts had not been missed through the recovery process and to ensure that appropriate action was taken.

The Performance Report was otherwise noted.

39/24 WELFARE REFORM UPDATE (STANDING ITEM)

The Principal Benefits & Council Tax Billing Manager (ARP) presented the quarterly Welfare Reform report.

The migration to Universal Credit (UC) continued, with tax credit claimants now being issued migration notices. The aim of DWP was that all those claiming legacy benefits would be issued migration notices from February 2025 onwards so that they would all be moved to UC by the end of December 2025.

Changes to eligibility for Winter Fuel Payments had led to a Pension credit take up campaign, which ARP was supporting. Also, in the Autumn Budget, it was announced that the State Pension would be increased by 4.1% from April 2025 in line with the triple lock.

It had also been announced in the budget that Local Housing Allowance rates had been frozen until 2026.

The Vice-Chairman, Councillor Cowen, asked if this migration to UC would create additional work. Members were informed that this was being closely monitored.

The Head of ARP pointed out that DWP had announced that 'New Burdens' funding would be made available for this work.

Councillor Horgan Keith had noted from the Minutes of the previous meeting that the volume of UC had increased by 30% and asked if the size of the Team dealing with this work was suitably staffed and was there any plans to increase staffing levels.

The Principal Benefits & Council Tax Billing Manager (ARP) informed Members that there had been some remodeling in the Team. An in-depth piece of work had been undertaken and had been concluded that all was in the right place at the moment in the Billing and Benefits Team. This piece of work was going to be expanded across the whole of the partnership to take a holistic review and forecast of resource requirements going forward.

The Head of ARP reminded Members that at the end of Quarter 2 there had been a significant increase in automation which was really helping and, in

	<u>Action By</u>
<p>terms of benefit position as we move into Quarter 3, new claims were completely up to date. There was no backlog now and ARP was in a better position than last year with outstanding work. It takes a while for this to come through into the year-to-date figures.</p>	
<p>In relation to the 97% of Universal Credit records being automated, Councillor Horgan said that all must remember that at the end of this there was a human being, and he was interested in how long the remaining 3% of customers were waiting for their claim to be updated.</p>	
<p>The Head of ARP explained that some cases took considerably longer than others, but she would be happy to provide further information regarding processing times of the more complex 3% cases that were processed manually. Automating the more straight forward cases freed up more resource to work on these more complex cases.</p>	LK
<p>Councillor Ashton queried the processing days in Quarter 2 as, in his opinion, it looked worse than Quarter 1</p>	
<p>The Head of ARP said that the figures were year to date and that at the previous informal briefing, monthly figures had been shared for comparison, she would be happy to provide the figures in future reports.</p>	LK
<p>The Welfare Reform report was otherwise noted.</p>	
<p>40/24 <u>ARP FORECAST FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE 2024-25 (STANDING ITEM)</u></p>	
<p>Alison Chubbock, the Assistant Director of Finance & S151 Officer (BDC) presented the report.</p>	
<p>The forecast at this stage of the year showed an above budget spend of £48k (0.4%) for the whole of the ARP and this was shown further in Appendix A of the report along with details of the variances.</p>	
<p>Enforcement income collected was lower than budgeted earlier in the year, however since then, an increase on collection was sought and would continue to be monitored closely. Whilst enforcement income was lower than budget, the debt recovered by the Enforcement Team was 20% higher in quarter 2 when compared to the same point last financial year and debt collection was up by 21%, resulting in above budget collection of income for partners which had been detailed in the performance report and did not show in this budget report.</p>	
<p>The national pay award had been agreed for local government during October. This financial forecast did not yet include the impact of this pay award; however, indications were that the cost of the agreed pay award was similar to the budgeted values used in this report.</p>	
<p>The budget for 2024-25 included a further efficiency target of £100k. To date £88k had been achieved for this year and the full target had been achieved for future financial years.</p>	
<p>The recommendation for Members to consider was read aloud and was duly proposed and seconded.</p>	

Following a unanimous vote, it was:

RESOLVED that:

1. the report and appendix be noted, and
2. the final full year variance at 31 March 2025 be shared between the partner authorities in the approved shares.

41/24 ARP JOINT COMMITTEE SERVICE PLAN AND RISK REGISTER REPORT

The Head of ARP presented the Service Delivery Plan.

In accordance with the ARP agreement a revised Service Delivery Plan for the new financial year should be agreed by the Joint Committee by the end of December of the previous year and delivery of the Plan reviewed every 6 months.

A Service Delivery Plan for 2024/25 had been agreed in December 2023 and this report provided an update below which detailed progress against the Plan and an update to the risk register.

A new Service Delivery Plan for 2025/26 had been drafted to come into effect April 2025.

In December 2023 Members reviewed the strategic direction of the ARP, deciding to maintain objectives whilst implementing a four-year Business Plan, subsequently effective from April 2024. The annual Service Plan complemented the Business Plan that ran until 2028.

Progress on the current Service Plan was detailed in Appendix A and the accompanying Service Plan update at Appendix C.

A new proposed Service Plan had been attached as Appendix B. The new style Plan linked directly into the approved priorities of the new 2024-28 4-year Business Plan. Further details had been included in the accompanying Service Plan Update at Appendix C.

Appendix C had a new layout and format and would have to be approved every year.

The Chairman felt that this was an excellent report and demonstrated just how good ARP was and felt that the whole report showed positive initiatives.

In response to a question as to when the New Burdens funding would be announced, Members were informed that it should be announced this month, in December.

Councill French was concerned about the number of empty homes including those owned by social providers and explained what had happened to one resident who had been given tenancy to such a property in the Fenland district. This particular resident had been unable to move in for months but had to pay Council Tax and felt that more support should be given to housing association tenants as some properties were in an appalling state.

The Chairman felt that if it was a Housing Association property it should be

Action By

the housing provider that had such questions to answer.

Councillor Cowen asked if ARP had lists of such empty properties. There were substantial voids in Breckland and having a list would help everyone to bring empty properties back into use. It would be useful to have that information disseminated to Members and closely monitored with the Housing Teams.

The Chairman agreed although many authorities would have their own way of keeping track of empty properties.

The Head of ARP stated that ARP did receive such data from the larger housing authorities but not so much from the smaller ones.

Councillor Ashton asked if the housing association provided information about people who had moved into an empty property and if such information was entered onto the system as he did not want to receive 2 tier information.

Councillor Horgan echoed comments made earlier by the Chairman. The whole of ARP was to be applauded that had been reflected in the recent National Institute of Revenues Rating & Valuation (IRRV) Awards. He then referred Members to Audit and GDPR section on page 58 of the agenda pack (section 7) and asked about the potential data breaches and asked what was meant by low risk. He also queried the Income and Expenditure at section 12 (page 63 of the agenda pack) in terms of the income falling short of budgetary requirements and felt that additional revenue would close this budget short fall.

The Head of ARP explained that it could be in terms of incorrect contact details, wrong address or it could be the fault of the postman delivering to the wrong house. It was pointed out that out of 1.2m letters only 36 contained the incorrect data.

In response to the latter query, the Head of ARP pointed out that the report stated £88k of efficiencies, so there was only £12k to be found and she was confident that this would be achieved by the end of the year.

Councillor Horgan was a little confused with the terminology between income and efficiencies.

Ian Smith, the Director of Finance (East Cambs DC), explained in more detail.

The Assistant Director of Finance & S151 Officer (BDC) suggested that perhaps the wording should be efficiency/income in future.

AC/LK

Following a unanimous vote, it was:

RESOLVED that:

1. the progress in respect of the December 2023 Service Delivery Plan at Appendix A be noted; and
2. the revised December 2024 Service Delivery Plan and risk register at Appendix B be approved.

42/24 ARP BUDGET 2025/26

Action By

The Assistant Director of Finance & S151 Officer (BDC) presented the budget report.

Attention was drawn to section 1.5 of the report where it was highlighted that when compared to the previous numbers, this proposed budget had increased significantly by £885k (7.6%) and the major drivers behind this increase could be seen in the table with an additional efficiency/income added of £100k.

The increases and changes to the National Insurance (NI) thresholds announced in the recent budget in October had added significant cost to the ARP salary budgets.

Local authorities were expected to be compensated for these increases but the detail on this had not been released as yet. In theory the NI grant would exactly match the increased NI costs to each authority and the ARP element could be passed across; however, the calculation methodology for this grant was not known and there was a risk that the grant would not fully fund authorities for the increased costs.

It was therefore being recommended that the Joint Committee delegate responsibility to the Operational Improvement Board (OIB) for determining the NI grant amount to be paid from the partner authorities into ARP once the detail on the NI grant funding had been announced by Government (this should be included within the Draft Local Government Finance Settlement announcement in December). The result of this would be a lower overall partnership budget once the grant income had been included. For indicative purposes, Appendix B provided an example of what the ARP budget could be if the NI changes were fully funded to all partners.

Councillor Ashton had noted that the budget included an efficiency target of £100k in 2025-26 rising to £200k in future years and asked if it would be better to spend a little money to reach the vision faster.

The Assistant Director of Finance & S151 Officer (BDC) said that the discussions with OIB around the level of savings that could be achieved through automation and income generation had been interesting.

Councillor Ashton felt that a proposal should be brought back to a future meeting how this might be done.

The Chairman felt that Officers would be better placed to discuss this matter moving forward.

AC

The Assistant Director of Finance & S151 Officer (BDC) stated that any costs involved would form part of the business case, and if it could not be funded by ARP itself, it would have to be split between partners.

Councillor Cowen agreed that this should be dealt with the Head of ARP and the Team of Officers to come up with some thoughts to establish what that balance might be and look to see if any further radical changes to the organisation could be made. Great work was already being done in terms of transformation and automation and this could be the platform going forward.

Action By

The Chairman mentioned the local government reorganisation and the devolution white paper which could have a huge impact.

Councillor Ashton explained that the transformation he was thinking of was if there was more capacity there would be more ideas of what could be improved, and what could be achieved. Any local government reorganisation still required Council Tax bills to be paid etc.

The Head of ARP said that the Team was always scanning the marketplace to see what was out there and always jumped on any opportunity when they appeared. There were certain areas that she was keen to develop further and would be more than happy to take that away to consider.

LK

The Chairman said that she looked forward to seeing such information in 2025.

Following a unanimous vote, it was:

RESOLVED that:

1. the ARP budget at Appendix A for 2025-26 be approved; and
2. the ARP Joint Committee delegate to the Operational Improvement Board (OIB) to determine the National Insurance grant values from the partner authorities to be included in the ARP budgets and the budgets be amended accordingly.

43/24 ARP SUNDRY DEBT PROVISION REPORT

Katey Mills, the Principal Fraud, Enforcement and Recovery Manager (ARP) presented the report.

Approval was being sought to provide a consistent sundry debt collection service and increase resource based on retention of 15% of the sundry debts collected on behalf of ARP partners.

ARP Enforcement (ARPE) currently collected sundry debts on behalf of East Suffolk and East Cambs, it also collected Housing Benefit overpayments, for all partners, but in small volumes. The collection of sundry debt did not attract enforcement fees and there were no powers under the Taking Control of Goods Act. Unfortunately, there was not a resource dedicated to collection of sundries and collection of these debts alongside other debt types within the current resource, and currently only low volumes could be accommodated.

Therefore, the proposal to Members was:

- To implement a new targeted approach to collection of sundries
- Roll out new initiatives – increased use of Tel Solutions, behavioural insights/propensity to pay and open banking
- Provide a consistent service to all partners with a dedicated resource including a focus on Housing Benefit overpayments
- Implementation of a debt recovery policy to set out how sundry debt collection would be dealt with.

The Options available to Members were:

Action By

- To maintain the current service provision and not include additional collection of sundry debt
- Expand the provision to all partners but do not increase resource. Implement a limit on volume and value of sundry cases accepted and continue to treat sundry debts as lower-level priority, accepting that the number of cases currently accepted for East Cambs and East Suffolk may reduce.
- Expand the service provision to all partners, increase compliance resource with a funding arrangement to retain a % of debt collected. This may also serve as an attractive proposition for new potential LA partners.

It was recommended that provision of this service be expanded to all and that the compliance resource was increased to provide a dedicated focus on these additional work streams.

Using East Suffolk as a base line, it was recommended that 15% retention of sundry debt collected be agreed and included a table outlining what this might potentially look like.

This same retention model would be captured with any new future partners and be included in agreements. Current external partners would also be approached to discuss the collection of Housing Benefit overpayments with a similar retention agreement.

The resource requirement would be regularly reviewed and would form part of the wider ARP resource review. There was already a part-time Officer in post who had indicated that they would be willing to take on additional hours. Fenland DC had already confirmed that they would not be passing sundry debts to ARPE initially, but the recommended approach would allow them to access the same service in the future.

Further outlined within the report were the risks, financial/legal and sustainability implications.

The Chairman was very happy in the knowledge that ARP was there when needed but expected that the 15% retention was just an estimate.

The Principal Fraud, Enforcement and Recovery Manager explained how the costs would work.

Councillor French asked if it was cost effective for Fenland DC to do this work itself.

Sam Anthony, the Head of HR & OD (Fenland DC) stated that she was looking at this before it was passed to ARP.

In response to a concern about the higher number of cases and housing benefits overpayments for East Suffolk DC, the Principal Fraud, Enforcement and Recovery Manager explained that East Suffolk was ARP's larger area, and consequently had larger housing benefit overpayments due to it starting UC sooner, but she would look into this.

Following a unanimous vote, it was

RESOLVED that:

SA

KM

Action By

1. the Joint Committee approve that a consistent sundry debt collection service be offered to all ARP partners; and
2. the Joint Committee approve an increase in resource funded by retention of 15% of the sundry debts collected on behalf of ARP partners.

44/24 FORTHCOMING ISSUES (STANDING ITEM)

None.

45/24 NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting on Tuesday, 18 March 2025 at 10am was noted. This would be a virtual meeting via Teams.

The following future meeting dates were agreed and noted:

- Tuesday, 17 June 2025 (face to face)
- Tuesday, 09 September (via Teams)
- Tuesday, 09 December (face to face)
- Tuesday, 17 March 2026 (via Teams)

Before moving onto the next item, on behalf of all Members, the Chairman congratulated the ARP Team for winning the IRRV Awards earlier in October.

46/24 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Act.”

47/24 PARTNERSHIP WORKING THROUGH A SECTION 113 AGREEMENT

The Principal Fraud and Enforcement Manager (ARP) provided Members with a detailed overview of the report.

The agreement would be overseen by legal and required formal approval from each ARP partner and would also include GDPR and system access information.

Most of the work would be undertaken remotely allowing ARP to replicate the efficient and effective processes it already had in place.

If Members were mindful to approve the recommendations, this would be a minimum 2-year agreement, and it was planned to begin provision of both fraud and enforcement services from 01/04/2025.

Councillor Ashton felt that this was good news and a great opportunity for the Partnership.

The Chairman asked if there was an analysis of all the demographics and wondered whether the monies spent on this could be more than first thought.

All to
Note

Action By

Members were informed that the caseload had been considered and ARP had a good understanding of what to expect. It had been predicted what was needed and one fulltime equivalent had been costed into the figures. The first few months would be the busiest due to staff training.

Following a vote which was unanimous, the two recommendations as listed in the report were approved.

It was noted that that S113 Agreement would be sent to each partner authority for signing.

48/24 ADDITIONAL ARP ENFORCEMENT AGENCY PARTNER

The Principal Fraud and Enforcement Manager (ARP) provided Members with a detailed overview of the report.

Councillor Horgan felt that this was a good opportunity for ARP.

Following a unanimous vote, the recommendation as listed in the report was approved.

The meeting closed at 11.35 am

CHAIRMAN