

arp

Anglia
Revenues Partnership

a truly unique partnership





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INTRODUCTION

The Anglia Revenues Partnership is a truly unique partnership delivering the Revenues and Benefits Services for five partner local authorities as equals rather than a separate entity charging for services.

The partnership allows us to take the best practice and experience from each of the five council districts.

Taking the very best from each partner to deliver the best services, the ARP is able to focus staff in becoming experts in their field and further their career development.

Having achieved the alignment of systems across the four back office locations, the ARP are now focussing development by working with suppliers to enhance the "Customer Journey" with straight forward digital service available 24 hours a day and automation of some back office processes, reducing the amount of manual data input required.

At the heart of the organisation is of course our staff, of which many have worked at the ARP since its inception. Together they are pioneering innovative ways of working at a time of great change in how Local Government Services are delivered.

Councillor Sarah Broughton

Chair, ARP Joint Committee
Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance
West Suffolk Council



Councillors

Councillor David Ambrose-Smith

ARP Joint Committee Member
Chairman Operational Services
Committee
East Cambridgeshire
District Council

Councillor Jan French

ARP Joint Committee Member
Deputy Leader
Fenland District Council

Councillor Maurice Cook

ARP Joint Committee Member
Elected Member
East Suffolk Council

Councillor Phillip Cowen

ARP Joint Committee Member
Cabinet Member
Breckland Council

A TIME OF CHANGE

The Anglia Revenues Partnership is currently the largest revenues partnership in England continuing to look for innovative ways of reducing costs, while improving services, with a focus remaining on excellent customer service.

As an organisation the ARP has the third largest Revenues & Benefits caseload in the country, only exceeded by the large urban authorities of Birmingham and Leeds.

	*Ctax Properties	**Business Rates	***Housing Benefit	Total
Birmingham	440,950	47,270	103,155	591,375
Leeds	352,370	29,380	60,410	442,160
Anglia Revenues Partnership	338,560	28,440	50,364	417,364
Cornwall UA	270,090	31,550	37,601	339,241
Sheffield	247,440	18,880	45,763	312,083
Manchester	228,300	26,610	52,427	307,337
County Durham UA	244,120	15,490	42,719	302,329
Liverpool	227,240	18,790	53,156	299,186

* Source: Valuation Office Agency (20th Sept 2018)

** Source: MCHLG Local Rating List (31 March 2018)

*** Source: DWP Housing Benefit Caseload Statistics (14th August 2018)

Among the services it offers partner councils include:

- Collection of Council Tax
- Collection of Business Rates
- Administration of Housing Benefit
- Administration of Local Council Tax Support (introduced on 1 April 2013)
- Fraud and Compliance
- ARP Enforcement (previously known as Bailiff Services) across the partner council areas
- Consultancy Services

The Partnership continues to take on new innovations beneficial to ARP Partners, our businesses, families and communities.

However, it needs to be stressed that ARP is not simply a money collecting agency. Through administering Council Tax Support (CTS) and Housing Benefit on behalf of the Partners, it provides low income working age families and pensioners with a means tested Housing Benefit to assist with rent and a reduction on the amount of council tax they have to pay.

By working together through this partnership, the councils are reducing costs and providing a more efficient, effective service.

The aim of the partnership is to run an efficient Council Tax and Housing Benefits service, while reducing administration costs to each partner council.

How the Partnership has developed

2003 Breckland District Council and Forest Heath District Council first combined their Revenues and Benefits services to form the ARP.

2007 East Cambridgeshire District Council joined the partnership

2011 St. Edmundsbury Borough Council joined the Partnership

2014 Fenland District Council joined the partnership

2015 Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Councils joined the Partnership



From April 1st 2019 - Four Partners become two Councils

- St. Edmundsbury Borough and Forest Heath District Councils merged to become West Suffolk Council.
- Suffolk Coastal District and Waveney District Councils merged to become East Suffolk Council.

ARP promises to continue to provide the same high quality of service and ongoing savings for the partner councils.

ARP'S CORE PURPOSE

At the heart of the ARP's role is the maximising of council tax and business rates income streams in excess of £650 million per annum on behalf of partner councils, and the delivery of Housing Benefit.

The Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP) delivers over £2 Million in efficiencies to the partners through innovative working, including the introduction of the ARP Enforcement Agency (ARPE). Those efficiencies are demonstrated as an individual council's cost as a partner of the ARP is the same, or less, for the delivery of their service than it was 10 years ago.

The members of the Joint Committee have agreed the ARP look to work with other Councils and public bodies to deliver specific services in partnership.

The initial areas offering future opportunities for partnership working include:

- Resilience services to assist other councils with backlogs
- Fraud and Compliance services for public sector bodies
- Enforcement and debt collection services
- Consultancy services

OUR CUSTOMERS

Area and population

	Area Km ²	Population
Breckland	1,305	138,602
East Suffolk	1,261	243,497
East Cambs	651	89,362
Fenland	547	99,170
West Suffolk	1,035	179,248
Total	4,799	749,879

With an area of nearly 2,000 square miles, most of the population of 750,000 have regular contact with the Anglia Revenues Partnership for Council Tax, Business Rates, Housing Benefit and Local Council Tax Support.

OBJECTIVES

- A strategic plan for the wider impact of revenues and benefits changes and proposals for businesses, families and communities.
- Use of data and intelligence to:

A	Improve collection rates by collating behavioural information and predicting modelling impact of schemes	B	Maximise income to identify properties that are not paying business rates or change of use
C	Provide analysis to individual Councils	D	Be at the forefront of innovation across the country
E	Digital Transformation and automation of services	F	Provide best advice to businesses on business rates to facilitate their growth and working with economic development teams

Enforcement Agency

In 2015 the ARP Enforcement Agency (ARPE) was set up. The ARPE team works much more closely with the Council Tax and business rates teams than external providers are able to. We are better able to respond in cases where vulnerable people are involved, to help those who are genuinely having difficulty in paying, and where appropriate, the team can withdraw statutory fees.

Debtors are asked to enter into arrangements that are affordable and take account of new debt from new year Council Tax bills. The enforcement actions seek to help debtors to find ways to break their current cycle of debt through referral to agencies and through ongoing dialogue.

In addition to providing a more responsive and compassionate service, the statutory fees collected provide a net income of over £800k per annum. This income can now be used to reduce the cost of the partnership to each Council.

Fraud and further recovery actions

When the DWP introduced the Single Fraud Investigation Service most Councils passed the whole of the Fraud team over to the DWP. The ARP retained part of the team to investigate Council Tax Support cases and other Council Tax discounts and exemptions.

The fraud and compliance activities carried out by the ARP Fraud team, along with other further recovery initiatives, identifies over £2 million each year of Council Tax, and the cost of staff providing these services is shared by the County Council.

OTHER PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVES










In November 2016 South Norfolk District Council delegated their Council tax and business rates debt enforcement work to Breckland Council for the ARPE to collect.

From April 2017 the ARP entered into a partnership agreement with Norwich City Council for shared management

services. This has led to further sharing of resource; fraud services funded by Norfolk County Council. Norwich

has passed their Council Tax and business rates debt to Breckland Council for the ARPE to collect from July 2019.

Highlights of the ARP

<p>Largest revenues partnership in England formed in 2003</p> 	<p>3rd largest Revenues & Benefits caseload in the country</p> 	<p>Savings of over £2 million a year</p> 
<p>Handling over £650 million in transactions a year</p> 	<p>Councils' costs for the service as a partner of the ARP are equal or lower than they were 10 years ago</p> <p>£ = or ↓</p>	<p>Acting as Head of Service for Norwich City Council from 2017</p>  <p>NORWICH City Council</p>
<p>Receipt of incoming paper documents reduced by 25% between 2018 and 2019</p> <p> 25% 2018-2019</p>	<p>Digital Transformation over 20k residents opting to receive notifications through online self service</p> 	<p>Flexible multi-disciplinary staff training and generic working with an in-house training team</p> 
<p>Receiving the full information using "intelligent" E-forms increasing yearly by 10% to over 32k submitted in the 2018-19 year. Getting the correct information first time, without the need to contact for further information</p>		 <p>↑10%</p>

GAINING FROM ECONOMIES OF SCALE

The Anglia Revenues Partnership Enforcement (ARPE) focuses on those who "will not pay" and provides advice and assistance for those who "cannot pay"

ARP Enforcement acts on behalf of authorities who are not partners of the ARP

Joint partnership procurement, for example mailing with over 1 million letters per year generated by the partnership

Investment in automation software improving completion times for repetitive data entry operations

Centralising of the in-house post room to one location, at Thetford, for all partners

Retention of in-house Fraud and Compliance team, identifying over £2m in the 2018-19 year

Single Person Discount
Business Rates
Tenancy Fraud
Council Tax
Local Council Tax Support

Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery Resilience with alignment on all partners work at all locations

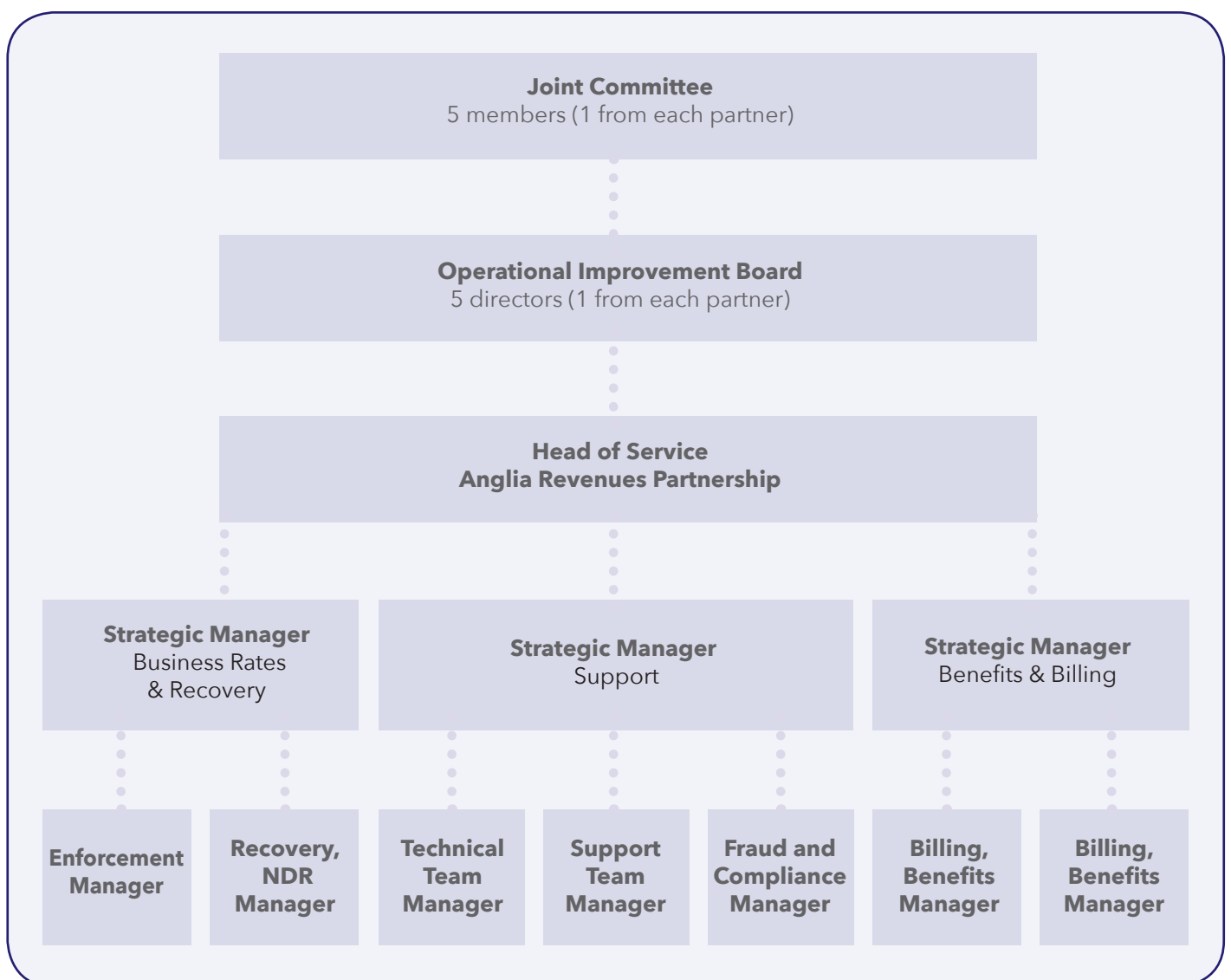
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GOVERNANCE

As its name suggests, the Anglia Revenues Partnership is a pure partnership, not a legal entity in its own right, sharing resources for the administration of Revenues and Benefits.

Governance of the ARP is provided through a formal reporting structure of one elected member representing each partner council, called the Joint Committee.

The Operational Improvement Board (OIB) consists of one director from each partner council, reporting to the Joint Committee.



VALUES OF THE ARP

Like any organisation committed to providing a high quality, efficient service, our workforce is the lifeblood of the Anglia Revenues Partnership.

A total of over 230 people work for the ARP across four ARP sites at Thetford, March, Melton and Lowestoft, using a single integrated network whichever office they are based at. With processes and procedures aligned across the four locations, staff are allocated to any area of the partners' outstanding work.



Positive Engagement

One team, sharing information to create positive change

Thinking Dynamically

Championing ideas to deliver improved services for our community

Efficient and Excellent

Delivering outstanding cost efficient services through improved technology

Respect and integrity

Across the partnership demonstrate respect, dignity, integrity, empathy and politeness to all

Taking Pride

Being proud in who I am, what I do and how I do this for all of us

OUR PEOPLE

Unlike most organisations, the ARP is a Partnership made up of five councils and staff are all employed by these partner councils although managed by the ARP providing our services.

Professional Qualifications and Modern ways of Working:

All staff are able to work from any of the four office locations, including agile working from other offices or remote bases.

This effective use of technology not only allows more flexible working on behalf of

the staff – allowing them to get a better work/life balance – it also obviously saves on travel time/costs, helping reduce our carbon footprint.

Working for the Anglia Revenues Partnership gives opportunities for training and development including career pathways to qualifications from professional bodies, such as the IRRV (Institute of Rates Revenues and Valuation).

Interested in a career with the Anglia Revenues Partnership?

angliarevenues.gov.uk/services/Job_vacancies



Cambridgeshire
Fenland
Hall, March,
Cambridgeshire
PE15 8NQ



Suffolk
The Marina,
Lowestoft, Suffolk,
NR32 1HH



Norfolk
Breckland House,
Thetford, Norfolk,
IP24 1BT



Suffolk
East Suffolk House,
Melton, Suffolk,
IP12 1RT

KEYS TO THE SUCCESS OF THE ARP

There are many reasons behind the success being enjoyed by the Anglia Revenues Partnership.

- ▶ Introduction of generic working with multi- skilled staff who are Council Tax, Housing Benefit and Local Council Tax Reduction trained.
- ▶ Aligning processes and procedures across the partnership.
- ▶ Working with Software Providers to improve and develop working methods including automation.
- ▶ Involvement with national initiatives and steering groups working closely with Members of Parliament, for example moving across to Universal Credit full service.
- ▶ Over 20,000 people across the ARP areas are reaping the benefits of dealing with their council tax and benefits on-line, actively embracing the use of new technology and encouraging 'channel shift'. Successfully moving customers away from time-consuming and expensive face-to-face interactions or telephone calls to using more efficient 24 hour web-based services.
- ▶ Innovative high-profile campaigns to make paper bills a thing of the past and encouraging people to sign up for on-line 'self service'.
- ▶ External experts have been used to carry out UX (User Experience) Testing when the ARP developed its new website reducing the number of 'clicks' the customer carries out for the website to be transactional, and get to do what they need to as quickly and easily as possible, using understandable language.
- ▶ ARP sends out over 1million letters a year including some 350,000 just at year end. The Partnership was able to negotiate a competitively priced external mailing service to reduce the cost of traditional letters to the best competitive rates on the market.
- ▶ The Partnership has built close working relationships with Citizens Advice Bureau, Housing Associations, Private Landlords and welfare groups.

For more information about the Anglia Revenues Partnership go to:
www.angliarevenues.gov.uk

WORKING WITH US

The ARP has always been a great partner to work with and their input into our product development has been very valuable.

ARP now have a very flexible service delivery model offering staff a choice of four office locations and home working.

Dave Young, CAPITA

Critiqom has found working with the ARP invaluable when reviewing and developing our own product offering as ARP have always valued best practice in the industry and have been instrumental in giving feedback to new products or service improvements. ARP bring a true collaboration approach on behalf of the councils they represent to ensure optimum service levels and value for money are achieved.

Agnes Williamson, Senior Account Development Manager, Critiqom Ltd.

Universal Credit was introduced in Lowestoft in May 2016 and Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP) was an integral support during its implementation, ensuring success from the start. They helped us build a network of local organisations that enabled us to quickly forge strong relationships to better support our customers in their Universal Credit Journey.

As Universal Credit rolled out and expanded across the district, ARP responded positively to continue to effectively support customers. They have also been involved both locally and nationally, providing feedback to help Universal Credit develop and evolve.

Julia Nix, East Anglia District Manager, Department for Work and Pensions

THE FUTURE

- ▶ Manage the changing workload of Universal Credit migration
- ▶ Expanding ARP enforcement to more Authorities
- ▶ Expanding the ARP Fraud and Compliance team to more Authorities
- ▶ Automation of work processes and procedures
- ▶ Digital Transformation and channel shift
- ▶ Develop easy to use intelligent forms getting the information right first time
- ▶ Customer Services continuous improvement
- ▶ Consultancy services
- ▶ Resilience Services - e.g. Norwich City Council



For more information, contact us by email at enquiries@angliarevenues.gov.uk