

 Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee - 7 th January 2014		Agenda Item No. <div style="text-align: right; font-size: 2em;">4</div>
Title	External Audit Report – Certification of claims and returns – 2012/13	
For further information about this report please contact	Mike Snow 01926 456800	
Service Area	Finance	
Wards of the District directly affected	N/A	
Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006	No	
Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number		
Background Papers		

Contrary to the policy framework:	No
Contrary to the budgetary framework:	No
Key Decision?	No
Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)	No

Officer/Councillor Approval		
With regard to officer approval all reports <u>must</u> be approved by the report author's relevant director, Finance, Legal Services and the relevant Portfolio Holder(s).		
Officer Approval	Date	Name
Chief Executive	19/12/13	Chris Elliott
CMT		
Section 151 Officer		Author
Legal		
Finance		
Portfolio Holder(s)	19/12/13	Andrew Mobbs
Consultation Undertaken		
Please insert details of any consultation undertaken with regard to this report.		
Final Decision?		Yes/No
Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)		

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1.1 The Council's external auditors are required to audit several grants and returns that are prepared by council officers each year. A separate report has been issued on these claims and returns relating to 2012/13.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 The Committee considers the Certification work report 2012/13 and if necessary agrees any further information required from either officers or the Council's auditors.

3. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 The Certification of claims and returns annual report should be considered by the Finance and Audit Scrutiny Committee. The external auditors will be present at the meeting to discuss the report and answer any questions.
- 3.2 Three claims required certification, of which only one required any amendment.
- 3.3 The Housing and Council Tax Benefit claim was qualified by the auditors. Whilst this is disappointing, as noted in previous years, it is the exception nationally for this claim to be unqualified. The original sample that was tested identified a single claim where the end date had been entered incorrectly. As a consequence further testing was undertaken, but no further errors were found. The claim is qualified purely on the basis of this single original error.
- 3.4 The Housing and Council Tax Benefit claim was adjusted in respect of a technical adjustment relating to a single landlord's change in status. This adjustment resulted from exceptional circumstances which were not correctly accommodated within the Benefits system. This adjustment did result in an additional amount subsidy of £9,427 due from DWP.
- 3.5 Noting the overall value of the Housing and Council tax Benefit Claim of over £40m, and the extremely complex nature of the claim, the outcome of the audit is most satisfactory, and one that most authorities would be very pleased with.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTION CONSIDERED

- 4.1 No alternatives are proposed as it is within the remit of the Committee to consider reports from the external auditors.

5. BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK

- 5.1 This is the first year that Grant Thornton have carried out the Council's audit, having secured the work following national procurement. As a consequence from this, the cost of the grant claims audit is £10,850, a substantial reduction from previous years, 2011/12 being £24,000.

6. POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 6.1 Bringing this report to members' attention is recognised as good governance.