

13 March 2019

Audit and Scrutiny Committee

Certification of Claims and Returns Annual Report 2017/18

Report of: *Ernst & Young*

Wards Affected: *None*

This report is: *Public*

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 To present the External Auditor's annual report in respect of the Certification of Claims and Returns; specifically, the Housing Benefit Subsidy Claim for the financial year 2017/18.

2. Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That Members note the contents of the Certification of Claims and Returns Annual Report 2017/18 at Appendix A.**

3. Introduction and Background

- 3.1 Local Authorities claim large sums of public money in grants and subsidies from Central Government and other grant-paying bodies and are required to complete returns providing financial information to government departments. The Council's External Auditors, Ernst & Young are required to undertake certification work to provide assurances to grant-paying bodies that claims for grants and subsidies are made properly or that information in financial returns is reliable.

4. Issue, Options and Analysis of Options

- 4.1 Attached as Appendix A is the Certification of Claims and Returns Annual Report 2017/18.
- 4.2 Section 1 of the report outlines the results of the 2017/18 certification work and highlights the significant issues.

- 4.3 The results of the Audit have highlighted that the level of error is high compared to other local authorities where Ernst Young undertake housing Benefit certification work.
- 4.4 The Section 151 officer annually reviews this report with senior officers within the service department of Revenues and Benefits before signing the final Claim.
- 4.5 Following the Audit, Revenues and Benefits have carried out a number of 100% reviews of specific case files to quality assure their processes in order to reduce the level of error in future year assessments.

5. Reasons for Recommendation

- 5.1 For Members to review the findings of the external audit's certification work.

6. References to Corporate Plan

- 6.1 The vision for improvements to services includes an action to strengthen the Council's governance arrangements, leading to faster, more effective decision-making. An effective scrutiny function is an essential element of that priority.

7. Implications

Financial Implications

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- 7.1 As explained in section 1, the Council's subsidy claim has been reduced by £26,328 and the Certification fees are shown in Section 2 of Appendix A.

Legal Implications

Name & Title: Daniel Toohey. Monitoring Officer

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- 7.2 [There are direct no legal implications arising directly from this report]

8. Background Papers

- 8.1 None

9. Appendices to this report

Appendix A – Certification of Claims and Returns Annual Report 2017/18

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