

SUBJECT:	EXTERNAL AUDIT – CERTIFICATION OF CLAIMS AND RETURNS ANNUAL REPORT
DIRECTORATE:	CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND TOWN CLERK
REPORT AUTHOR:	JACLYN GIBSON, CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To receive and comment upon the External Audit Certification of Claims and Returns Annual Report for 2017/18.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 External Audit are required to report annually the results of the grant certification work. The report for 2017/18 is in a different format to that of previous years due to the appointment of a new External Auditor.

3. Report Summary

3.1 Appointment of Auditors 2017/18

Historically the Certification of Claims and Returns Annual Report has covered both the Housing Benefit Claim and the Housing Pooling Return. The Housing Benefit Claim was completed under the Public Sector Audit Appointment (PSAA) certification arrangements, however the Housing Pooling Return does not form part of this arrangements and is subject to a separate engagement process. As the certification of both claims has previously been carried out by the Council's appointed External Auditor the Housing Pooling Return has been included in the Certification of Claims and Returns Annual report for completeness, but there is no requirement to do so under the PSAA arrangements.

- 3.2 As the Housing Benefit Claim was under the PSAA certification arrangements for 2017/18 the claim has been audited by the Council's External Audit for that financial year, KPMG LLP. However as the Housing Pooling Return was outside the scope of the PSAA certification arrangements the Council appointed its new External Auditor, Mazars LLP to undertake this work. As there is no requirement to report the outcomes of this certification process there is no separate report for the Audit Committee to consider, however Mazars LLP will be in attendance at the Audit Committee and can provide verbal feedback if required.

3.3 Housing Benefit Claim 2017/18

Adjustments were necessary to the Council's Housing Benefit Claim, totalling £607. The claim, as in previous years, was subject to a qualification letter. The claim had a value of £31.9 million.

The fee for certifying the Council's 2017/18 Housing Benefit Claim is £10,570. The actual fee was the same as the indicative fee. The 2016/17 fee was £10,549.

The qualification letter will be sent to the DWP and further adjustments may arise following a review of the claim.

There were also no recommendations to improve the claim completion process.

3.4 Appointment of Auditors 2018/19

For 2018/19, the Council is responsible for appointing their own reporting accountant to undertake the certification of the housing benefit subsidy claim in accordance with the Housing Benefit Assurance Process (HBAP) requirements that have been established by the DWP. For 2018/19 the Council has appointed Mazars LLP to undertake this work. The Council has yet to appoint an auditor for the Housing Pooling Return for 2018/19.

4. **Organisational Impacts**

4.1 There are no direct financial impacts arising from this report.

4.2 There are no direct legal impacts arising from this report.

5. **Recommendation**

5.1 That Audit Committee should note and comment on the attached audit report.

Is this a key decision?	No
Do the exempt information categories apply?	No
Does Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules (call-in and urgency) apply?	No
How many appendices does the report contain?	One
List of Background Papers:	None

Lead Officer:

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