

Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee

Certification of Claims and Returns 2008/09 – Audit Commission

22 March 2010

Report of Head of Finance

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to allow consideration of the Certificate of Claims and Returns Report 2008/09 produced by the Audit Commission (see Annex). The report reviews the council's arrangements for the preparation and administration of grant claims within the council.

This report is public

Recommendations

The Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee is recommended to:

- (1) Note the contents of the Certification of claims and returns - annual report
- (2) Note the agreed Action Plan presented as Appendix 2 to the Audit Commission Report.

Executive Summary

Introduction

- 1.1 The report identifies that the Audit Commission was responsible for certifying claims and returns to the value of £94m in 2008/09, this certification work being charged on an hourly basis to the council.
- 1.2 A limited review of three claims and a full review of one claim was performed. (Paragraph 10 of the report explains the difference.) No amendments were required to the claims subject to limited review.
- 1.3 The Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit Claim requiring full certification, was subject to a number of adjustments and as a result the Audit Commission issued a qualification letter to the grant-paying

body. The reasons for this are detailed in paragraph 19 of the report.

- 1.4 As a result of the discussions resulting from this review, the Action Plan at Appendix 2 has been agreed with the Audit Commission. All of the actions relate to the housing benefit claim qualification and officers will be working to ensure that these recommendations are implemented.

Conclusion

- 1.5 The claims and returns associated with National Non Domestic Rates Return, Disabled Facilities Grant and Pooling of Housing Capital Receipts are being prepared in a strong control environment and supported by detailed working papers.
- 1.6 Improvements relating to the Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit Claim are required to ensure that 2009/10 claim is not qualified. The Service Assurance Manager has developed an action plan with the audit commission and together with our partner Capita will ensure that all recommendations are implemented. This committee will be informed of progress against the action plan.

Key Issues for Consideration/Reasons for Decision and Options

- 3.1 This report summarises the Audit Commissions findings from the review of our work on our 2008/09 grant claims and returns 2008/09 audit.

The following options have been identified. The approach in the recommendations is believed to be the best way forward

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|-------------------|--|
| Option One | To note the contents of the report |
| Option Two | To raise issues or questions relating to this report |

Implications

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|-------------------|--|
| Financial: | Funding from government grant-paying departments is an important income stream for the Council. The Council needs to manage claiming this income carefully.
Comments checked by Karen Muir, Corporate System Accountant 01295 22159 |
| Legal: | There are no implications arising from this report
Comments checked by Liz Howlett, Head of Legal |

Risk Management: and Democratic Services 01295 221686
Failure to provide adequate arrangements for the administration and preparation of grant claims result in both financial and reputation risks to the Council.
Comments checked by Karen Muir, Corporate System Accountant 01295 22159

Wards Affected

All

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
Appendix 1	Certification of claims and returns - annual report
Background Papers	
Various Claims, Returns and Working Papers	
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