

Audit and Standards Committee – 10th February 2015

Report of the Chief Officer Finance and Legal Services

Grant Thornton Letter: Grant Certification Work 2013/14

Purpose of Report

1. The External Auditor's Letter on Certification of Claims and Returns for 2013/14 is attached and representatives from Grant Thornton will be available at the meeting to deal with any issues.

Background

2. As from 1 November 2012, the Council's external auditor is Grant Thornton. The external auditor undertakes a range of audits.
4. For 2013/14, the External Auditors undertook work to certify council grant claims and returns totalling £110m. Their grant claims certification letter on that work is attached as an Appendix. The letter outlines issues arising from their work and makes a couple of recommendations for the Council's grant claiming processes.
5. Auditors are required to conduct their work in accordance with instructions agreed with the grant awarding department or body and, subject to any permitted discretion, to issue qualifications where the strict grant conditions are not met. The vast majority of qualifications do not result in any withdrawal of grant by the awarding department or body.

Finance

6. Grant charged fees for grant certification work for 2013/14 of £16,418 which is less than the indicative fee as detailed in Appendix C in the Letter. Fees for schemes no longer requiring certification (such as the national non-domestic rates return) have been removed. The fees for certification of housing benefit subsidy claims have been reduced by 12 per cent, to reflect the removal of council tax benefit from the scheme. The certification of the Teachers Pension return for 2013-14 is now outside the scope of the Audit Commission regime. It is now subject to a separate engagement letter and fee of £6,500.

Law

7. Legislation appertaining to Local Authority Audit and Accounts is contained in the Local Government Act 1999, the Audit Commission Act, 1998, and regulations made therein.

Equality Impact

8. A number of the grants that the Council receives are for activities benefiting children and young and disadvantaged sections of the community.

Recommendation

9. That Members note and comment on the External Auditor's Letter on the Certification of Claims and Returns for 2013/14 which is attached to this report.



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Chief Officer Finance and Legal Services

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List of Background Papers

Certification of claims and returns letter for 2013/14