

REPORT TITLE: CERTIFICATION OF CLAIMS & RETURNS ANNUAL REPORT
2022/23

18 JULY 2024

REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER: Cllr Cutler – Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member
For Finance and Performance

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WARD(S): ALL

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Certification of Claims and Returns Annual Report is to summarise the results of KPMG LLP's assurance work on the council's housing benefits (HB) subsidy claim for the year ended 31 March 2023. A summary report is provided by KPMG and is attached at Appendix 1 for consideration, and details two errors, summarised below.

The sample testing undertaken by KPMG identified one case where the HB computer system incorrectly classified overpaid expenditure as a claimant error, rather than technical error. This was where the claim had been cancelled and the account had been ended. This issue was taken up with our software supplier and they have provided a script to identify any future cases of inaccurate classification. KPMG are happy with this process and will test its resilience when completing the 2023/24 audit. This error had a minor impact on the final subsidy claim of £60.85 (of the £8.8m total for this area of subsidy) but had no effect on the value of HB paid to the claimant.

In additional testing, which was undertaken due to an error reported in the prior year HBAP accountants report, private pension income in one claim was identified as being incorrectly assessed. This resulted in a £67 overpayment error, extrapolated out to £210. This error did not affect the amount claimed of £9.6m for this area of subsidy.

The volume of claims and change of circumstances processed for housing benefit in 2022/23 (in excess of 10,000) was, again, considerable. Together with the volume of HB paid out to claimants (in excess of £18.5m), this is another successful annual review for the Benefits team.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That the Audit and Governance Committee considers the attached Annual Report (Appendix 1).

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 Housing Benefit Assurance Process Accountants Report 2022/23