

REPORT TITLE: CERTIFICATION OF CLAIMS AND RETURNS ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22

20 JULY 2023

REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER: Cllr Cutler – 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 subsidy claim for the year ended 31 March 2022.

Of the sample testing undertaken by KPMG one error affected benefit entitlement (an overpayment of 30p) and is detailed in Appendix A of the attached report. Another item was identified (created by a system bug) which had no impact on the amount of housing benefit paid, but did result in a small subsidy adjustment. An exception report has been created by our software supplier which identifies discrepancies and is now reviewed every four weeks as part of the subsidy monitoring process. This item is also detailed in Appendix C. As a result of the reduction in findings by KPMG this year, there will be no requirement for the further 40+ CAKE testing on Earnings next year, reducing the cost of the audit and work undertaken by the team.

Given the volume of claims processed for housing benefit in 2021-22, which is in excess of 13,500, this is again a very positive report, and highlights the level of accuracy executed by officers within the Benefits team. It should also be noted that the Benefits team at that time were still operating under significant pressure due to the effects of Covid and the economic impact on residents. They were also still required by central government at that time to administer the Test and Trace scheme. This provided valuable compensation to low income residents who were prevented from working, due to the restrictions around Covid, but it applied additional strain on the small 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 2021/22