

## EXTERNAL AUDIT - HOUSING BENEFIT SUBSIDY 2019/20

Audit Committee - 15 July 2021

**Report of:** Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer - Finance & Trading

**Status:** For Information

**Key Decision:** No

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr. Matthew Dickins

**Contact Officer:** Adrian Rowbotham, Ext. 7153

**Recommendation to Audit Committee:** That the report be noted.

### Introduction and Background

- 1 Grant Thornton, as the Council's external auditor, is required to certify certain grant claims submitted by the Council. This certification typically takes place six to nine months after the claim period but has taken longer this time, and represents a final but important part of the process to confirm the Council's entitlement to funding.
- 2 Only one claim was certified for 2019/20, the Housing Benefit Subsidy Claim, relating to expenditure of £22.5m.

### Annual Outcome

- 3 Housing Benefit Subsidy is a complex claim. Errors were identified in the 2019/20 return; however, the number continues to be small. This reflects the measures taken over recent years. Although the impact of these errors on the value of the overall claim was relatively minimal, it is important to claimants that their benefit is calculated correctly. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) stipulates high standards of accuracy resulting in any claims being incorrect by as little as 1p are classified as errors and additional testing is then required on a larger sample.

### Key Implications

#### Financial

The financial implications are included elsewhere in this report.

#### Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

There are no legal implications.

The work carried out by the external auditors provides a thorough examination of the grant claim processes of the Council. Any significant issues found are reported to Members.

Equality Assessment (Compulsory heading - do not delete)

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

**Appendices**

Appendix A - Grant Thornton Housing Benefit Assurance Process Report 2019/20

**Background Papers**

None

**Adrian Rowbotham**

**Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer - Finance & Trading**