
Audit and Governance Committee

15 February 2010

Report of the Assistant Director of Resources (Finance)

Certification of Claims and Returns 2008/09 – Audit Commission

Summary

1. 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.

Background

2. The report identifies that the Audit Commission was responsible for certifying claims and returns to the value of £140.3m in 2008/09, this certification work being charged on an hourly basis to the council.
3. The overall conclusion from the Audit Commission's findings was that the council has improved its grant claim arrangements from 2007/08. Although similar proportions of grant claims have been amended or qualified, more submission deadlines have been met and fewer delays occurred in those where the deadline was not met.
4. The 2008/09 reports does note that a number of improvements have been made in relation to working papers; the standard is more consistent, there is evidence that reviews are being undertaken and referencing is clearer.
5. The report also recognises specific improvements that can still be made:
 - a) Delays in the submission of Grant claims should be notified to the Audit Commission;
 - b) Claims should be reviewed for inconsistencies;
 - c) The requirements of certification instructions should be met more closely, along with supporting working papers;
 - d) Consideration should be given to issues raised in previous years.
6. The Audit Commission report on Grant Claim Certification 2007/08 was presented to this committee on 21 September 2009. A follow up response to the report was given to members on 21 December 2009 which explained that due to the timing of the 2007/08 audit commission report, 8 out of 10 claims for 2008/09 had already been received by the Audit Commission before the 2007/08 report was available. Therefore work continues in 2009/10 relating to the comments raised by the Audit Commission from the 2007/08 report.

7. As a result of the discussions resulting from this review, the Action Plan at Appendix 3 has been agreed with the Audit Commission. Although responsibility for some of these actions lies with Finance Managers within Directorates, Corporate Finance continue to play a supporting role in implementing these actions.

Consultation

8. Corporate Officers have contributed to this report where appropriate.

Options

9. Not relevant for the purpose of the report.

Analysis

10. Not relevant for the purpose of the report.

Corporate Priorities

11. This report contributes to the overall aims and priorities by helping to ensure probity, integrity and honesty in everything it does. It specifically contributes to the effective Organisation priority in the Corporate Strategy.

Implications

12. There are no financial implications other than those outlined in the report. There are no HR, equalities, legal, crime and disorder, IT or property implications arising from this report.

Risk Management

13. Failure to provide adequate arrangements for the administration and preparation of grant claims result in both financial and reputation risks to the Council.

Recommendations

14. Members are asked to:
 - (a) consider the content of the Certification of Claims and Returns report 2008/09;

Reason

To enable members to consider the effectiveness of the council's grant administration activity, and in particular the areas for improvement identified within the report.

- (b) note the agreed Action Plan presented as Appendix 3 to the Audit Commission Report.

Reason

To enable members to comment on the proposed improvement arrangements.

Contact Details

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Report Approved

Date 29/01/10

Specialist Implications Officers

Not applicable

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

Audit and Governance Committee 21 September 2009: Grant Claim Certification Report
2007/08 – Audit Commission

Audit and Governance Committee 21 December 2009: Follow Up Audit Recommendations

Annex

Certification of Claims and Returns 2008/09 – Audit Commission