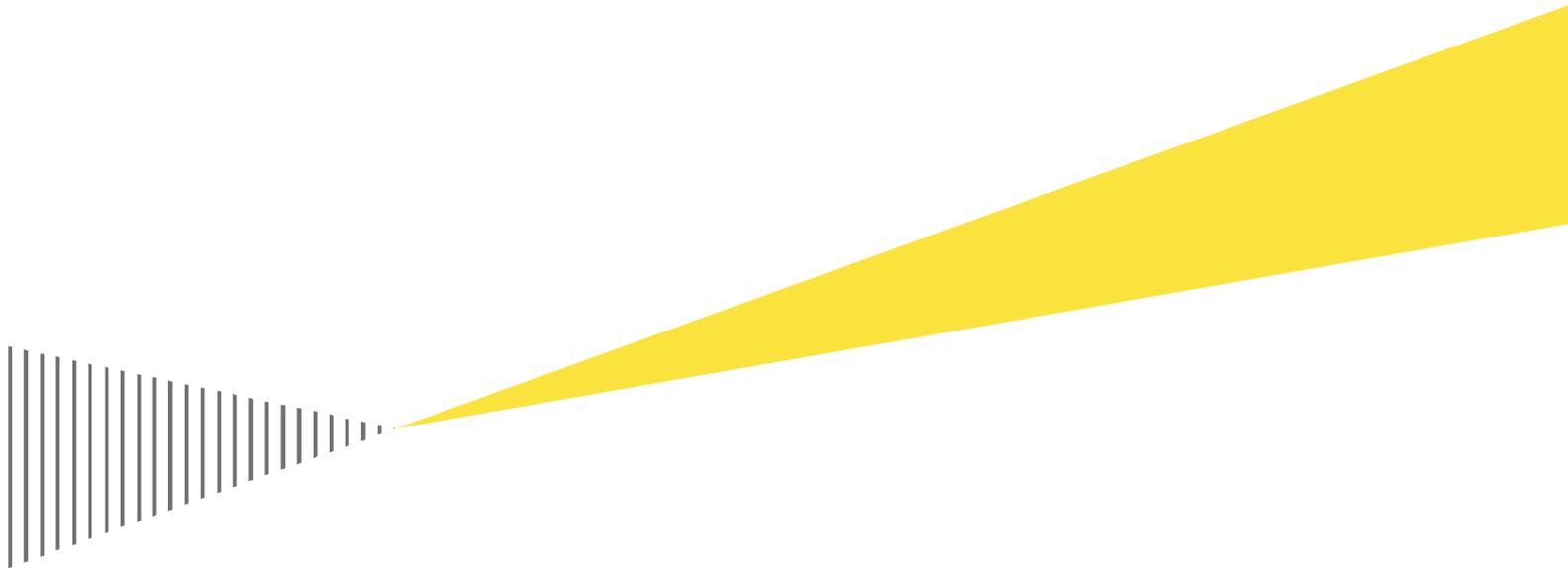


Certification of claims and returns annual report 2016-17

South Oxfordshire District Council and Vale of White Horse District Council

December 2017

Ernst & Young LLP



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South Oxfordshire District Council and Vale of White
Horse District Council
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December 2017
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Dear Members

Certification of claims and returns annual report 2016-17 South Oxfordshire District Council and Vale of White Horse District Council

We are pleased to report on our certification and other assurance work. This report summarises the results of our work on South Oxfordshire District Council and Vale of White Horse District Council (the Councils) 2016-17 claim.

Scope of work

Local authorities claim large sums of public money in grants and subsidies from central government and other grant-paying bodies and must complete returns providing financial information to government departments. In some cases these grant-paying bodies and government departments require appropriately qualified auditors to certify the claims and returns submitted to them.

From 1 April 2015, the duty to make arrangements for the certification of relevant claims and returns and to prescribe scales of fees for this work was delegated to the Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

For 2016-17, these arrangements required only the certification of the housing benefits subsidy claim. In certifying this we followed a methodology determined by the Department for Work and Pensions and did not undertake an audit of the claim.

Summary

Section 1 of this report outlines the results of our 2016-17 certification work.

We checked and certified the housing benefits subsidy claims with a total value of £28,867,478 (South Oxfordshire District Council) and £28,005,500 (Vale of White Horse District Council). We met the submission deadline.

For South Oxfordshire District Council our certification work found errors which the Council corrected. The amendments did not have an impact on the grant due.



Fees for certification and other returns work are summarised in section 2. The housing benefits subsidy claim fees for 2016-17 were published by the Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) in March 2016 and are available on the PSAA's website (www.psa.co.uk).

We welcome the opportunity to discuss the contents of this report with you at the 29 January Joint Audit and Governance Committee.

Yours faithfully

Andrew Brittain
Associate Partner
Ernst & Young LLP
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1. Housing benefits subsidy claim

1.1 South Oxfordshire District Council

Scope of work	Results
Value of claim presented for certification	£28,867,478
Amended/Not amended	Amended – minor amendments made to the claim to adjust for errors identified. This had no impact on the subsidy paid.
Qualification letter	No
Fee – 2016-17	£9,623
Fee – 2015-16	£10,972

1.2 Vale of White Horse District Council

Scope of work	Results
Value of claim presented for certification	£28,005,500
Amended/Not amended	Not amended
Qualification letter	No
Fee – 2016-17	£12,488
Fee – 2015-16	£11,616

Local Government administers the Government's housing benefits scheme for tenants and can claim subsidies from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) towards the cost of benefits paid.

2. 2016-17 certification fees

The PSAA determine a scale fee each year for the audit of claims and returns. For 2016-17, these scale fees were published by the Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA's) in March 2016 and are available on the PSAA's website (www.psa.co.uk).

Claim or return	2016-17	2016-17	2015-16
	Actual fee £	Indicative fee £	Actual fee £
Total Housing benefits subsidy claim			
South Oxfordshire DC	9,623	9,623	10,972
Vale of White Horse DC	12,488	12,488	11,616

3. Looking forward

2017/18

From 1 April 2015, the duty to make arrangements for the certification of relevant claims and returns and to prescribe scales of fees for this work was delegated to (PSAA) by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

The indicative certification fee for 2017/18 for South Oxfordshire District Council is £10,972 and for Vale of White Horse District Council £11,616. This was set by PSAA and is based on final 2015/16 certification fees.

Details of individual indicative fees are available at the following web address:
<https://www.psaa.co.uk/audit-fees/201718-work-programme-and-scales-of-fees/individual-indicative-certification-fees/>

We must seek the agreement of PSAA to any proposed variations to these indicative certification fees. We will inform the Head of Finance before seeking any such variation.

2018/19

From 2018/19, the Councils will be responsible for appointing their own reporting accountant to undertake the certification of the housing benefit subsidy claim in accordance with the Housing Benefit Assurance Process (HBAP) requirements that are being established by the DWP. DWP's HBAP guidance is under consultation and is expected to be published around January 2018.

We would be pleased to undertake this work for you and will provide a competitive quotation for this work.

We currently provide HB subsidy certification to 106 clients, through our specialist Government & Public Sector team. We provide a quality service, and are proud that in the PSAA's latest Annual Regulatory and Compliance Report (July 2017) we score the highest of all providers, with an average score of 2.6 (out of 3).

As we also expect to be appointed by PSAA in December 2017 as your statutory auditor we can provide a comprehensive assurance service, making efficiencies for you and building on the knowledge and relationship we have established with your Housing Benefits service.

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