

Steve Mair
City Treasurer
Westminster City Council
Westminster City Hall
64 Victoria Street
LONDON
SW1E 6QP

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Dear Duncan

Grant Thornton UK LLP
Grant Thornton House
Melton Street
London
NW1 2EP
T: +44 (0)20 7383 5100
F: +44 (0)20 7383 4715
grantthornton.co.uk

Certification work for Westminster City Council for year ended 31 March 2016

We are required to certify certain claims and returns submitted by Westminster City Council ('the Council'). This certification typically takes place six to nine months after the claim period and represents a final but important part of the process to confirm the Council's entitlement to funding.

The Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 gave the Secretary of State power to transfer Audit Commission responsibilities to other bodies. Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) have taken on the transitional responsibilities for HB COUNT issued by the Audit Commission in February 2016.

We have certified one claim for the financial year 2015/16 relating to expenditure of £225 million. Further details of the claims certified are set out in Appendix A.

There were no significant issues arising from our certification work which we wish to highlight for your attention. We are satisfied that the Council has appropriate arrangements to compile complete, accurate and timely claims/returns for audit certification.

The scale fee set by PSAA for the Council for 2015/16 is £22,410.

Yours sincerely

Paul Dossett

Paul Dossett
For Grant Thornton UK LLP

Appendix A - Details of claims and returns certified for 2015/16

Claim or return	Value	Amended?	Amendment (£)	Qualified?	Comments
Housing benefits subsidy claim	£225,565,844	No	N/A	Yes	See below

Housing benefits subsidy claim (BEN01)

Audit testing was undertaken in line with the guidance. This requires us to carry out sample testing of 20 cases across the three types of benefit paid by the Council. The detailed testing covers all transactions for each case in the sample to confirm that benefit has been awarded in accordance with regulations and correctly recorded for subsidy purposes.

Our initial testing of 60 cases identified 1 error. The error was as a result of individual error in interpretation of the information supplied by the claimant. This resulted in an overpayment for the period. No errors identified were as a result of system failure.

The DWP requires additional testing for every error identified within the initial population testing. The extended sample should only cover the specific error identified and not all transactions. Testing of the initial sample of 60 cases identified one error in headline cell 094 Rent Allowances, where the Authority had incorrectly applied the claimants earned income in the benefit entitlement calculation. As a result the benefit had been overpaid by £6.

As a result, an additional random sample of 40 cases was selected for testing from the sub-population of cases where the claimants were in receipt of earned income within the rent allowance total expenditure. Testing of the additional 40 cases did not identify any issues where the Authority had incorrectly included the claimants earned income in the benefit entitlement calculation.

The error in the claim has been corrected in their Housing Benefit system in 2016/17.