



# Grant Thornton

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Dear Shaer

## Certification work for Wirral Council for the year ended 31 March 2018

We are required to certify the Housing Benefit subsidy claim submitted by Wirral 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 Ltd (PSAA) took on the transitional responsibilities for HB COUNT issued by the Audit Commission in February 2015.

We have certified the Housing Benefit subsidy claim for the financial year 2017/18 relating to subsidy claimed of £122.088 million. Further details are set out in Appendix A.

We identified several issues from our certification work which we wish to highlight for your attention. There were a number of errors from the extended testing that we carried out on this year's subsidy return, which recurred from 2016/17. The extrapolated financial impact on the claim, which we have reported to the DWP, was relatively insignificant compared to the total subsidy receivable.

As a result of the errors identified, the claim was amended and qualified, and we reported our findings to the DWP. The DWP may require the Council to undertake further work or to provide assurances on the errors we have identified.

The indicative fee for 2017/18 for the Council was based on the actual 2015/16 certification fees, reflecting the amount of work required by the auditor to certify the Housing Benefit subsidy claim that year. The indicative scale fee set by PSAA for the Council for 2017/18 was £23,850. This is set out in more detail in Appendix B.

Yours sincerely

Grant Thornton UK LLP

**Appendix A - Details of claims and returns certified for 2017/18**

Claim or return	Value	Amended?	Amendment value	Qualified?	Comments
Housing benefits subsidy claim	£122,088,134	Yes	(£469)	Yes	See below

**Findings from certification of housing benefits subsidy claim**

**Manual adjustments**

The total number of rent rebates cases was 96 for the year and it was agreed that the Council's Benefits Team would check all 96 cases to allow an amendment to be agreed should errors be identified. Under the HB COUNT methodology, we were required to review all errors identified by the Council and a sample of the remaining cases. We discussed the results of our work with officers and agreed several manual adjustments to the claim, resulting in an overall decrease to the amount of subsidy claimed by the Council of £469.

**Claimant Income**

We identified two cases where assessors had incorrectly calculated claimants' earned income from evidence provided in respect of claims in receipt of Rent Allowances. We found 2 errors out of 60 cases tested, leading to an extrapolated overpayment of £23,489.

**Backdated Benefit Expenditure**

We identified one case where benefit was awarded by assessors for an incorrect backdated period. The total value of the extrapolated overpayment, over the 40 cases tested, was £472 which we reported in the qualification letter.

**Appendix B: Fees for 201718 certification work**

Claim or return	2015/16 fee (£)	2017/18 indicative fee (£)	2017/18 actual fee (£)	Variance (£)	Explanation for variances
Housing benefits subsidy claim (BEN01)	£23,850	£23,850	£23,850	£0	
Total	£23,850	£23,850	£23,850	£0	