

Audit Committee – 13 March 2012

Scrutiny of Council Payments: Over £500 Payments List

Summary of report

This report summarises items which have been queried / scrutinized from the publicized over £500 payments list for the period 1 September 2011 to 31 January 2012.

Recommendation

- 1. To note the contents of this report.**
- 2. To agree whether this report is routinely required for future meetings of the Audit Committee.**



**James Walsh
Chief Finance Officer
29 February 2012**

Resource and legal considerations

The key role of the Audit Committee is to provide independent assurance on the adequacy of the council's risk management framework and the internal control and reporting environment. Inspection of council expenditure assists in the committee discharging this duty.

Governance issues / Citizen impact

Scrutiny of the council's payment systems strengthens assurance about the council's general reporting and governance and particularly about systems used to control expenditure.

Performance and risk management issues

Inspection of payment systems helps to ensure that risk and performance standards are being applied in the management of council expenditure.

Equality implications

Assurance reporting encompasses key equality and diversity implications.

Consultation

Appropriate advice has been taken from communications & marketing, performance (information & records), financial services and procurement in preparing this report.

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Background

At its meeting of 1 September 2010, Audit Committee discussed the new requirement for local authorities to publish spending of over £500. This requirement followed the Prime Minister and CLG Ministers wish to see local authorities publish local spending data; to drive the open data agenda.

Audit Committee of 28 February 2011 agreed that it wished to see a half yearly report of items which have been scrutinized from the payments list, together with the council's response.

Over £500 Payment List Queries

For the period 1 September 2011 to 31 January 2012:

- 824 unique users viewed the website (5 months data).
- During the period, no external requests for information in respect of the open data web site were sent to the open data shared email or directly to Walsall Council communications team.
- The information and records team responsible for managing Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests, received no requests relating to items specifically referred to on the over £500 payments list.

Future Arrangements

As part of this agenda item, Audit Committee members are asked to determine whether continuation of this 6 monthly report remains of value to them in discharging their responsibilities, in view of the lack of external scrutiny noted in this and the previous report presented to 26 September 2011 Audit Committee.