

**MINUTES OF THE GRANTS PANEL MEETING HELD ON
8th MARCH 2022 VIA TEAMS**

PRESENT: Randal Hemingway, Head of Financial Services
Caroline Powell, Principal Auditor, Internal Audit (IA)
Nia Thomas, Chair of PWG, Education & Children (Revenue)
Les James, Chair of PWG, Communities
Rhian Phillips, Economic Development Area Manager
Delyth Thomas, Grants Compliance Officer
Anwen Worthy, Audit Lead, Audit Wales

APOLOGIES: Helen Pugh, Head of Revenues & Financial Compliance
Stuart Walters, Chair of PWG, Chief Executive
Alan Howells, Chair of PWG, Environment
Simon Davies, Chair of PWG, Education & Children (Capital)
Helen Morgan, Economic Development Manager

	SUBJECT	ACTION
1.0	<p><u>Minutes of the last meeting</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minutes were agreed. 	
2.0	<p><u>Matters Arising</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The service level agreement with Hywel Dda Local Health Board (LHB) for Wanless (Money Transfers) is still being redrafted. This has also been reported by Audit Wales as part of the 2020/21 audit. Clarification to be sought regarding the status of the revised agreement. The WLGA to be contacted regarding the outcome of discussions with Welsh Government (WG) on the retention requirements stipulated in the WG's terms & conditions of grant. The grant conditions currently do not stipulate a specific period on how long the Authority is required to retain all original documentation relating to WG grant funded projects. The exercise to review the audit requirements stipulated in the terms & conditions of grants awarded to the Education & Children department for 2021/22 hasn't been completed. When completed results of the review to be reported to IA. A meeting to be arranged to discuss any areas to be considered as part of the closure of European grant funded projects. While the current programme is due to end 31st December 2023, current projects delivered by the Authority have differing end dates leading up to the programme end. 	<p>RH</p> <p>RH</p> <p>NT</p> <p>DT</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where applicable a further reminder to be disseminated via the departmental project working groups (PWG) to remind officers of the requirement to comply with the Grants Project Proposal Form (GPPF) process as detailed in the Project Grants Manual. • Issues have been raised with some WG claim forms that are received for completion. These include e.g. the format of the claim forms itself, claim forms in excel format with inconsistent formulae and claim forms which do not note the requirement for an authorised signatory to sign. Concerns to be forwarded to WG's Grant Centre of Excellence 	<p>Chairs of PWG</p> <p>DT</p>
3.0	<p><u>Audit Wales - Update</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An update was provided on the 2020/21 audit programme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ NDR & Teachers Pension completed ○ Housing Benefits – almost complete ○ Wanless (Money Transfers) – audit completed however the observation letter identifying issues during the audit to be agreed ○ Pooled Budgets (for 2019/20 & 2020/21) – outstanding queries to be resolved • Audit Wales require confirmation on whether EUR04 Article 55 income declaration statements have been submitted for projects delivered under the Convergence programme. • It has been confirmed that there is no physical pooling of budgets arrangement with Hywel Dda LHB in relation to Care Home Commissioning for 2020/21. • It is anticipated that there will be no change to the audit programme for 2021/22. 	<p>DT</p>
4.0	<p><u>Internal Audit (IA) - Update</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The grant audits included in the 2021/22 audit plan have been completed. • Partneriaeth which is the new Education Regional 	

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	<p>Consortia have agreed the audit arrangements for 2021/22 Regional Consortia School Improvement grant and the Pupil Deprivation grant. The audits will be undertaken by each Local Authority's IA Section following the submission of the year end claims. The audit completion date is September 2022.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The grant work included in the 2022/23 audit plan will remain the same as 2021/22. • Within the Memorandum of Understanding for the 2 Levelling Up projects there is a requirement for IA to undertake an audit review at project completion stage. 	
5.0	<p><u>Grants Register 2021/22</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An updated register was presented to the meeting detailing current grant funded projects. It was noted that the Authority is still receiving grant awards from WG for 2021/22 along with variation letters to some original grant offers received during the year increasing the value of grant awarded. • As previously noted in Grants Panel copies of grant award letters are not always forwarded to the GCO and officers within the appropriate Accountancy Sections. There are also instances where financial profiles relating to grant applications and grant claims not always being passed to Accountancy for review prior to submission. An email to be sent to the Chairs of the Project Working Groups to remind officers of these requirements. 	RH
6.0	<p><u>Project Working Groups</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minutes of PWG meetings were received: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Education & Children (revenue): 23/4/2021, 1/7/2021 & 14/10/2021 ○ Education & Children (capital): 21/9/2021, 23/11/2021 & 25/1/2022 ○ Communities: 24/11/2021 & 26/1/2022 ○ Chief Executive: 25/11/2021 	

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	<p>The following updates were provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ there has been a marked increase in the number of grants awarded to the Authority ○ differing terms & conditions of grant vary from one grant to another ○ grants awarded within tight timescales for delivery which could result in potential underspends ○ all factors having an impact on the ability to manage and deliver some projects 	
7.0	<p><u>European Grants Update</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A schedule of all current European grant funded projects was presented to Grants Panel. The total estimated project costs approved and in development is £49.6m with grant of £32.6m. However it was noted that the Authority is still waiting for formal notice of additional funding for Crosshands East Gateway Plot 3 and Llandeilo Market Hall. The Authority is awaiting a decision on the Food COVID Recovery Plan project submitted under the Rural Development Programme. • An update was provided to Grants Panel on the amount of grant income outstanding to the Authority for European grant funded projects. The total amount claimed to date is approximately £20.73m with a total of £2.5m grant income outstanding. 	
8.0	<p><u>Successor Schemes Update</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eleven projects have been approved through the UK Government's Community Renewal Fund for the area with a current completion date of June 2022. However the Authority has been approached by the UK Government regarding possible extensions to the completion dates. • UK Government has issued pre-launch guidance on the Shared Prosperity Fund. 	

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9.0	<p><u>New & Proposed Projects</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The following were noted from the WG Settlement for 2022/23 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ there is a provision for Universal Free School Meals with a commencement date of 1st September 2022. Concerns were raised around the deliverability and capacity within some schools to provide free school meals ○ for some grants the level of grant is the same as 2021/22 therefore not allowing for any pay award or inflationary increases ○ the 2022/23 Homelessness grant award will be based on how the grant has been utilised in 2021/22 • The new regional Corporate Joint Committees are now in place and there will be an expectation that some grants will be awarded to the joint committees in 2022/23 as opposed to each of local authority. 	
10.0	<p><u>SharePoint - Implications EU funded projects</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long term arrangements need to be considered relating to access to project documentation that could be subject to audits long after the project end date. A meeting to be arranged with the Records Management Officer. • Closure guidance for grant funded projects needs to be reviewed to ensure it includes information on the retention of documents held electronically as well as those in paper format. 	<p>RP/DT</p> <p>RP/DT</p>
11.0	<p><u>AOB</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grants Panel members were informed that should pay information be requested to support a grant funded project that pay reports have been created and are available as an alternative to payslips. The pay reports provide the key payroll information and do not contain personal information. 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A qualification report was issued in February 2020 by Audit Wales on the procurement arrangements for stairlifts in the Housing Division. Update on the current arrangements to be provided in the next Grants Panel meeting. 	LJ
12.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Date of next meeting – 1:00pm on 6th July 2022 via Teams 	