

**MINUTES OF THE GRANTS PANEL MEETING HELD ON
2nd OCTOBER 2023 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
 Adrian Harries, Chair of PWG, Environment
 Rhian Phillips, Economic Development Area Manager
 Eleanor Ansell, Audit Lead, Audit Wales
 Delyth Thomas, Grants Compliance Officer (GCO)

APOLOGIES: Stuart Walters, Chair of PWG, Chief Executive
 Simon Davies, Chair of PWG, Education & Children (Capital)

	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 Director of Corporate Services has confirmed that there are ongoing discussions regarding the role of SASG in the allocation of funding to projects via the capital programme. Welsh Government (WG) is currently looking at standardising the formula for the allocation of funding to schools for the Education Improvement grant (EIG) for 2024/25 which is part of the Regional Consortia Schools Improvement grant (RCSIG). The impact of the change is uncertain. Audit Wales to confirm if the Audit Wales Central Team will be issuing a grant index for the 2022/2023 audits. If not, then confirmation of the audit submission dates and audit deadlines will be sent to GCO via email. A meeting has been arranged to establish which grants will be included in the IA audit plan for 2024/25. Guidance has been received from WG on the implications of the delay in settling the Soulbury pay award and the impact on grant funded projects. The Authority can claim the back pay relating to the 2 outstanding years in the one financial year grant claim, however this could result in an overspend against the approved budget which may deem the excess ineligible. Should this be the case the 	<p>EA</p> <p>RH/CP/DT</p>

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	<p>Authority may need to fund the balance. It is noted the Soulbury pay award has yet to be settled.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An update was provided in the last meeting on European funded projects that were due to end from July 2023 onwards. Since the meeting the Celtic Routes project had been given a month's extension to 30/9/2023. • The Director of Corporate Services has raised via CMT that the impact on other departments needs to be considered along with the cost benefit of small grants when applying for funding. 	
3.0	<p><u>Audit Wales - Update</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As part of the 2022/23 audit programme NDR3 (LA01) and Teachers Pension (PEN05) – audits are underway and on target to be completed by the audit deadline date. The audit of the remainder of the grants will be programmed later in the year as and when resources are available. These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Housing Benefits (BEN01) - return submitted ○ Pooled Budgets (HLG01) - return submitted ○ WANLESS Money Transfers (HLG03) – to be submitted as soon as possible 	
4.0	<p><u>Internal Audit (IA) - Update</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An update was provided on the audits of the 2022/23 grant funded projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pupil Development grant and Education Improvement grant (under RCSIG) have been completed ○ There are a few outstanding queries to be resolved on Housing Support Grant. An extension to the audit deadline date has been agreed ○ The audit of Children & Communities grant has been completed and the audit of the Local Education grant is underway 	

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5.0	<p><u>Grants Register 2023/24</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The draft grants register for 2023/24 was presented to the meeting. A request was made to the Chairs of the PWGs to review to assure that all grants received in their respective departments are listed. 	Chairs PWGs
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 (capital): 25/7/2023 Communities: 26/7/2023 Chief Executive: 24/1/2023, 21/3/2023, 25/7/2023 Clarification was sought on the use Docusign on internal documents. The Head of Financial Services confirmed that there is no requirement to use Docusign on internal documents. It was also confirmed that Docusign needs to be utilised for grant agreements with third parties. The number of children receiving free school meals has an impact on grant funding for schools. This has been publicised and requests have been made to parents in receipt of the School Essential grant to complete applications for free school meals to maximise the grant available. Concerns have been raised on the governance arrangements in place for schools who apply and accept capital grants. Discussions need to be undertaken with the relevant officers within Education and Property Services to agree the deliverability of the project and the impact on other works to be undertaken at the school. Whether it changes the school capacity also needs to be considered. 	
7.0	<p><u>European Grants Update</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The current programme of European funded projects is due to end in December 2023. The projects ending in October 2023 are: 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Communities for Work P1 & P3 ○ Regional Engagement Team ERDF & ESF ● A full list of projects including total project spend and grant received to be presented in the next Grants Panel meeting. 	DT
8.0	<p><u>Successor Schemes Update</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It has been confirmed that following Cabinet approvals 99% of the grant allocated through Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) has now been committed. There is a tight turnaround to deliver all projects as most will end in December 2024 with the whole program ending March 2025. ● There are 5 anchors funded via SPF which are mainly delivering third party grants. There are also some projects that the Authority will be delivering internally. ● Approval has been awarded for 18 strategic projects through SPF. There are 6 projects to be delivered internally by the Authority with 12 projects being delivered externally. For one of the 12 projects Carmarthenshire will be delivering in partnership with the lead organisation. ● Ongoing monitoring is being undertaken of all the projects funded via SPF with a review at the end of the financial year to assess project spend. Where projects are not forecast to spend then there is a risk that the grant will be decommitted. ● Confirmation to be sought on what audit requirements are in place for SPF. ● The Towy Valley Path project funded via the Levelling Up Fund (LUF) has been awarded a year's extension due to delays in acquiring the land to build the path. ● The construction costs for the Carmarthenshire Hwb, which is funded by LUF, has significantly increased. The costs associated with the NHS element of the project has also increased and is also looking for 	RP

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	<p>additional grant funding to meet the shortfall. Consideration also must be given to the future operational cost of running the Hwb.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The UK Government are currently undertaking a deep dive audit on both the Towy Valley Path and Carmarthenshire Hwb projects. The audit looks at various strategies and policies of the Authority e.g. procurement, risk. These will be reviewed ahead of carrying out more detailed checks. 	
9.0	<p><u>AOB</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grants Management training to be rolled out for new project officers. The impact of the Public Subsidy requirements for grant funded schemes to be considered on a corporate basis. This to be included on the agenda at the next Grants Panel meeting. An officer from Legal Services to be invited. There is a possibility that some of the current WG funded grants could be incorporated into the Revenue Support Grant from 2024/25. 	RP
10.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Date of next meeting – 19th February 2024 at 2pm via Teams 	