

**MINUTES OF THE GRANTS PANEL MEETING HELD ON  
22<sup>nd</sup> FEBRUARY 2024 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  
 Mike Bull, Vice Chair of PWG, Chief Executive  
 Eleanor Ansell, Audit Lead, Audit Wales  
 Steve Murphy, Senior Solicitor  
 Delyth Thomas, Grants Compliance Officer (GCO)

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

	<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>ACTION</b>
1.0	<p><b><u>Minutes of the last meeting</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minutes were agreed.</li> </ul>	
2.0	<p><b><u>Matters Arising</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Audit Wales has previously shared the grant index which details the grants/returns for audit and the Certification Instructions (CI's) with the Authority. Due to the limited audit work now undertaken the grant index will no longer be provided but they will continue to share the CI's.</li> <li>A meeting has been undertaken to establish which grants will be included in the IA audit plan for 2024/25. The IA audit plan is due to be submitted to the Governance and Audit Committee in March 2024.</li> <li>There are no specific audit requirements for the Authority for the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF). However as part of the claims process there is a requirement to provide supporting documentation to Swansea Council as the lead body.</li> </ul>	
3.0	<p><b><u>New Public Subsidy Requirement</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An overview was provided by Legal Services on the impact of the new public subsidy requirements for grant funded schemes called the UK Subsidy Control (SC).</li> <li>The Authority must demonstrate that the subsidy complies with the SC regime fully in advance of the</li> </ul>	

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	<p>award.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where there is a 'no subsidy' a record must be retained including any evidence that led to this conclusion as the decision could be challenged. Schemes can only be challenged at scheme level and not on an individual basis.</li> <li>• Officers managing schemes that are impacted by the SC regime should contact the Legal Section for advice and guidance.</li> <li>• The Project Grants Manual is to be reviewed taking into account the new public subsidy requirements.</li> <li>• Consideration to be given to setting up a central State Aid register for all schemes which are subject to the new requirements.</li> </ul>	RP
4.0	<p><b><u>Audit Wales - Update</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An update was provided on the 2022/23 audit programme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Teachers Pension (PEN05) and NDR3 (LA01) – completed</li> <li>○ Pooled Budgets (HLG01) – almost complete</li> <li>○ WANLESS Money Transfers (HLG03) – in progress</li> <li>○ Housing Benefits (BEN01) – the deadline for the audit was 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024. The audit deadline has been missed for all Welsh Authorities and the Department of Works &amp; Pension have been advised and have extended the deadline to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024. The audit for this authority is on course to be completed by mid-March.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
5.0	<p><b><u>Internal Audit (IA) - Update</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The audits of the 2022/23 grant funded projects has been completed with no major concerns raised.</li> <li>• Audit requirements are to be reviewed for the 2023/24 audit as a result of the Pupil Development Grant being incorporated into the Local Authority</li> </ul>	

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	<p>Education Grant.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proposed changes to some of the education grants for 2024/25 are currently being look at by the department. A meeting is to be arranged with IA to discuss the proposed changes and agree an audit plan going forward.</li> </ul>	NT/CP
6.0	<p><b><u>Grants Register 2023/24</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An updated grants register for 2023/24 was presented in the meeting. The Chairs of the PWGs were advised that grant information was not always passed to the GCO so that it can be included on the corporate database.</li> <li>Further discussions to be undertaken in the next Grants Panel meeting regarding the corporate database and any improvements that can be made.</li> </ul>	<p>Chairs PWGs</p> <p>All</p>
7.0	<p><b><u>Project Working Groups</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minutes of PWG meetings were received: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communities: 27/9/2023</li> <li>Chief Executive: 26/9/2023, 21/11/2023, 23/1/2024</li> <li>Place &amp; Infrastructure: 27/9/2023, 22/11/2023</li> </ul> </li> <li>Concerns are being raised on slippages for a number of projects due to delays in delivery, rising costs and the procuring of works/services.</li> <li>It is not envisaged that there will be a late surge of grant offers to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 from Welsh Government (WG) that have occurred in previous years. However a grant offer from WG has just been received for Transforming Towns with an end date of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.</li> <li>From a budget perspective the panel was reminded of the impact of the pay award for the last two years on grant funded projects where the offer of grant has remained the same. There will be a greater</li> </ul>	

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	<p>impact on grants awarded for 2024/25 especially for schools.</p>	
8.0	<p><b><u>European Grants Update</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A full list of EU funded projects detailing total project costs and grant funding was presented to Grants Panel. The total approved expenditure for all projects was £59.2m with an approved grant of £38.7m. The final actual costs totalled £50.6m with a grant of £36.2m.</li> <li>• There is £7.5m of grant monies still due to the Authority for various projects. There are number of audit checks/queries still being received from WEFO. There is no clear indication when the final grant monies will be received.</li> <li>• The document retention deadlines are also being recorded for each project. The Authority is still awaiting confirmation of the deadlines for a number of projects.</li> </ul>	
9.0	<p><b><u>Successor Schemes Update</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The delivery end date for SPF is December 2024 with financial claims being submitted by the end of March 2025. An extension has been requested to extend the SPF project for 9 months. A decision is expected by the end of March 2024.</li> <li>• The Authority has been advised by the lead body that funding due to the Authority will be paid in advance. The impact of the advance payment is currently being worked through.</li> <li>• The progress on the Carmarthenshire Hwb, which is funded by the Levelling Up Fund (LUF), has reached a critical stage. An application for additional funding is awaiting approval from WG. If approved UK Government will be notified by the Authority accordingly. It is at this stage that the works contract can be awarded. The planned start date for the works is April 2024 with a completion date of April 2025.</li> </ul>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Towy Valley Path project funded via (LUF) is progressing and there is no expected increase on costs to date. There is still an issue on acquiring the land to build the path.</li> </ul>	
10.0	<p><b><u>AOB</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discussions are ongoing with IT on the development of a system to manage the submission of the grants project proposal form (GPPF). As part of the Project Grants Manual project managers are required to complete and receive approval before submitting any application for grant.</li> </ul>	
11.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Date of next meeting – 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2024 at 2pm via Teams</li> </ul>	