

**MINUTES OF THE GRANTS PANEL MEETING HELD ON
27th NOVEMBER 2020 VIA TEAMS**

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

APOLOGIES: Helen Pugh, Head of Revenues & Financial Compliance
 Simon Davies, Chair of PWG, Education & Children (Capital)
 Alan Howells, Chair of PWG, Environment

	SUBJECT	ACTION
1.0	<p><u>Minutes of the last meeting</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minutes were agreed. <p><u>Matters Arising</u></p>	
2.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The service manager of Y Ffwrnes has been contacted and is fully aware of the requirements to adhere to WEFO's Article 55 income monitoring for the European Structural Funds programme 2007-13. No issues identified to date. Confirmation to be obtained that the service level agreement with Hywel Dda LHB has been amended to reflect the approved budget figures for the Wanless return (Money Transfers) for 2019/20. Arrangements have been made to provide procurement training for officers in the Education & Children department and officers within the Homes & Safer Communities division of the Communities department. The Article 57 reviews for projects under the 2007-13 European Structural Funds programme have been completed for the following projects and no issues identified: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Property Development Fund Collaborative Communities Local Investment Fund Crosshands East Strategic Employment Site Carmarthenshire Physical Regeneration Scheme <p>Grants Panel would like to record a note of thanks to all involved in the process.</p>	DT

	SUBJECT	ACTION
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approval has been received from the Director of Corporate Services for the current delegation arrangements for signing of grant claims within the Financial Services Division to remain in place. • The exercise to review grants awarded in 2019/20 and 2020/21 to assess any impact on the amount of grant awarded to the Authority due to the COVID 19 pandemic is still ongoing. • Outstanding grant income for two European grant funded capital projects is in excess of £2m, project managers for each of the projects have been contacted to establish reasons for the delay. • Due to the nature of the ERASMUS+ project, which is the European Union's exchange programme for students and staff, it has been agreed that the elements which require travel are put on hold due to the COVID 19 pandemic. 	DT/Chairs PWGs
3.0	<p><u>Internal Audit (IA) - Update</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The following audits for 2019/20 have been completed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Housing Support Grant (Approximately £22k expenditure was identified as ineligible. This is to be recovered by WG) ○ Pupil Deprivation Grant ○ Education Improvement Grant • Audit work for the Post 16 grant is due to be completed in January 2021. • The terms and conditions of grant relating to the Additional Funding for Communities for Work Plus requires an audit certificate to be completed by the Authority's Internal Auditor or Chief Finance Officer. It was agreed that this additional WG grant audit certificate will be signed by the Chief Finance Officer. • Internal Audit undertook assurance work for the 2019/20 Children and Communities Grant. It has been agreed that this will also be undertaken for the 2020/21 financial year. 	

	SUBJECT	ACTION
5.0	<p><u>Grants Register 2020/21</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An updated register covering all departments was presented to Grants Panel. Register to be reviewed and updated as and when required. 	Chairs PWGs/DT
6.0	<p><u>Project Working Groups</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minutes of PWG meetings were circulated to Grants Panel members for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Education & Children (Revenue): 13/2/20, 20/3/20, 13/5/20 & 18/6/20 ○ Education & Children (Capital): 22/9/20 ○ Communities: 23/9/20 ○ Chief Executives: 21/7/20 • Concerns regarding delays in the approval of exception reports relating to procurement were noted. • It was reported that additional grants are being awarded with tight timescales for delivery resulting in potential underspends. Some grants have been awarded with specific criteria which don't offer any flexibility. Sometimes there is a capacity issue for managing the additional grants being awarded. A consistent approach by WG in awarding grants year on year would be useful. An email to be sent to the Director of Corporate Services and WLGA relaying these concerns. • The impact of the COVID 19 pandemic has resulted in a number of concerns: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ deliverability of projects by the end of the project term ○ limited availability of contractors ○ limited availability of staff to manage projects • A number of funds are being made available by WG for the local authority to access. However the time scales for bids or expressions of interest to be submitted are short, with no flexibility on submission deadlines along with a limited time to spend the grant. 	RH

	SUBJECT	ACTION
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 £47.3m with grant of £30.7m. • Celtic Routes, a European grant funded project under the Ireland/Wales Co-operation programme led by the Carmarthenshire County Council has been extended from December 2020 to May 2023 with additional grant awarded. • The Authority is still awaiting approval for bids submitted under the RDP programme for the following projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Caru Cymru (regional project led by Keep Wales Tidy with Carmarthenshire County Council as a partner) ○ Growing Green Infrastructure (regional project led by Neath Port Talbot Council with Carmarthenshire County Council as a partner) ○ Rural Resilience • A bid is due to be submitted for the Economic Acceleration & Regeneration Through Innovation project (EARTH). This a regional bid led by Carmarthenshire County Council in partnership with Pembrokeshire County Council, Neath Port Talbot Council and Swansea Council with total project costs of approximately £4m. Deadline for approval by WEFO is 31st December 2020. • Projects due to finish within the next year include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ BUCANIER ○ Carmarthenshire Cycling Hub for Wales ○ Cam Nesa • Proper arrangements need to be put in place where projects are due to end and where staff contracts are ending. • Arrangements to be put in place to ensure closure procedures have been adhered to for projects that have ended. 	<p>All</p> <p>RP/DT</p>

	SUBJECT	ACTION
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 £16m with a total of £2.7m grant income outstanding. • There is a lack of information relating to the Shared Prosperity Fund and future funding programmes, which is posing an ongoing risk to the Authority. 	
8.0	<p><u>City Deal Update</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCC is involved in 4 projects to be funded through City Deal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pentre Awel (previously Wellness) – Carmarthenshire ○ Digital Infrastructure (regional) – led by CCC ○ Skills & Talent (regional) – led by CCC ○ Homes & Power Stations (regional) – led by Neath Port Talbot • A number of processes are followed before a bid is formally presented to both UK and Welsh Governments for approval. • It is anticipated that Pentre Awel, Digital Infrastructure and Homes & Power Stations will be approved by late Spring 2021. Prior to approval projects proceed at risk. • The Skills & Talent project is at the consultation stage and its submission to both governments is anticipated in the next 6 months. • The Director of Corporate Services and Head of Administration & Law have agreed that Grants Panel has a monitoring role in Pentre Awel, Digital Infrastructure and Skills & Talent projects as these are led by Carmarthenshire County Council. Clarification to be sought on the Panel’s role in the Homes & Power Stations project as this is led by Neath Port Talbot. 	

	SUBJECT	ACTION
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas for consideration for monitoring by Grants Panel are possibly the grants claim process, adhering to the terms of the funding agreements, achievements of outputs and GVA uplift (gross value added). • Internal Audit are due to undertake a review of Pentre Awel as it is included in the 2020/21 audit plan. • The Swansea Bay City Region Finance Manager to be invited to the next Grants Panel meeting to explain the financial mechanics in the award of funding of projects through City Deal. Grants Panel can then assess their monitoring role in the process. 	RH
10.0	<p><u>New & Proposed Projects</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A bid has been submitted to the WG's Valleys Taskforce for £145k funding for Llyn Llech Owain, the project is proposed to be 100% funding through grant. 	
9.0	<p><u>AOB</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grants Management training has been undertaken with 31 officers from the Environment and the Chief Executives' Departments having attended so far. The way the training is being rolled out is under review with further training sessions to be undertaken from January 2021 onwards. • The Childcare Offer small grant scheme is funded by Welsh Government. The scheme is led by Ceredigion County Council while Carmarthenshire County Council administers the small grant scheme in its local authority area. The scheme provides third party capital grants of up to £10k per annum to childcare providers to upgrade current facilities. <p>The WG terms and conditions of grant require all grant recipients of the grant to continue to provide childcare for 5 years from the grant offer.</p>	RP/DT

	SUBJECT	ACTION
	<p>The Grants Manual notes a requirement to place a restriction on a property for capital grants awarded to third parties of less than £25k.</p> <p>WG do not require restrictions to be imposed and the Authority has other mechanisms for monitoring that the childcare setting is still in place. It is recommended that an exemption to apply restrictions on properties relating to this grant is passed to the Director of Corporate Services for approval.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work is being progressed on the introduction of electronic signatures e.g. Adobe sign and DocuSign. Education and Children Services to be used to trial its use in the signing of acceptance of grant. 	<p>RH/RP</p> <p>CP/NT</p>
10.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Date of next meeting – 2:00pm on 26th February 2021 via Teams 	