

**MINUTES OF THE GRANTS PANEL MEETING HELD ON
26th FEBRUARY 2021 VIA TEAMS**

PRESENT: Randal Hemingway, Head of Financial Services
 Caroline Powell, Principal Auditor, Internal Audit (IA)
 Rhian Phillips, Economic Development Area Manager
 Nia Thomas, Chair of PWG, Education & Children (Revenue)
 Les James, Chair of PWG, Communities
 Delyth Thomas, Grants Compliance Officer
 Kate Havard, Financial Audit Team, Audit Wales (AW)
 Richard Arnold, Swansea Bay City Region Finance Manager

APOLOGIES: Helen Pugh, Head of Revenues & Financial Compliance
 Simon Davies, Chair of PWG, Education & Children (Capital)
 Stuart Walters, Economic Development Manager
 Helen Morgan, Economic Development Manager
 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 2020/21 service level agreement with Hywel Dda LHB for Wanless (Money Transfers) is currently with the Director of Communities for signing. Checks to be undertaken to ensure figures within the agreement reconcile with the Authority's approved budget. 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 was presented to Grants Panel. For some grants the value awarded is the same for both years and doesn't allow for any inflationary increase. It was also noted that several new grants awarded to the Authority are COVID 19 related. Project managers of two European grant funded capital projects have been contacted to confirm the current status of the grant income outstanding from the funder. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grant monies of £1.5m for the Pendine Attractor project has now been received Grant income of £471k was outstanding for the Crosshands East Strategic Employment Site Phase 2. The sum of £152k has now been received. Following a meeting with WEFO and WG to review the procurement 	DT

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	<p>process undertaken for the project WEFO has confirmed that all costs relating to the procurement exercise are eligible</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns continue to be raised regarding delays in the approval of exception reports relating to procurement. This is to be followed up with the Director of Corporate Services. • Concerns regarding additional grants being awarded with tight timescales for delivery, grants being awarded with specific criteria with no flexibility, and the capacity in managing the additional grants have all been raised with the Director of Corporate Services and WLGA. The Head of Financial Services is currently awaiting feedback from a meeting between WLGA and WG on these issues. • The approval for an exemption to apply restrictions on properties relating to the Childcare Offer Small Grant Scheme funded by WG is still under consideration by the Director of Corporate Services. Request for approval to be followed up. • The introduction of electronic signatures e.g. Adobe Sign and DocuSign by the Authority is now being managed by TIC who will be liaising with all relevant parties. 	<p>RH</p> <p>RH</p> <p>RH</p>
3.0	<p><u>Audit Wales - Update</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The audit programme for 2019/2020 has almost been completed with one qualification letter issued for the Wanless (Money Transfers) return. However the 2019/20 return for Pooled Budgets has yet to be submitted for audit. • There is no anticipated change to the audit programme for 2020/21. However clarification is to be sought regarding the audit requirements for the COVID 19 grants managed by the Authority and those administered on behalf of Welsh Government. • Following the increase in the number of grants awarded to the Authority by WG, the Head of Financial Services working with the WLGA is looking 	KH/RH

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	<p>for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ increased flexibility on delivery due to the increase number of grants awarded ○ increased flexibility due to the impact of COVID 19 on the ability to deliver grants ○ clarification on how this could be linked to audit work due to be undertaken as the delivery of some grants has been moved from the 31st March 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Where grant monies are received and issued by the Authority as agency payments guidance to be sought from Audit Wales central team on how these should be reflected in the Statement of Accounts. 	<p>RH</p> <p>RH</p> <p>KH</p> <p>RH/KH</p>
4.0	<p><u>Internal Audit (IA) - Update</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Audit work for the Post 16 grant for 2019/2020 has been completed. ● The audit certificates for the 2020/21 quarter 3 claims have also been completed for the Pupil Deprivation Grant and the Education Improvement Grant. ● Where some audit certificates for grants are to be signed by the Chief Finance Officer, the Chief Finance Officer will determine if any assurance work needs to be undertaken by IA before the certificate is signed. 	
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. Several new grants recently awarded are COVID 19 related. 	
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 (Capital): 24/11/20 ○ Communities: 25/11/20 ○ Chief Executives: 24/11/20 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With the increased number of grants being awarded to the Education & Children Department, concerns have been raised on the impact this has on managing these additional grants on both the department and each individual school. • As part of the approval process of the RDP Implementation reprofile the unit rates relating to staff costs under the Simplified Costs Options rules have been approved by WG. 	
7.0	<p><u>European Grants Update</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Authority has been notified that the Cara Cymru – Caring for Wales project has been approved under the Rural Development Programme. This is a pan Wales project led by Keep Wales Tidy with Carmarthenshire County Council as a partner. The project will run until 2023. • The Authority is still waiting for approval for an application submitted for the Economic Acceleration & Regeneration Through Innovation project (EARTH). This a regional project to be led by Carmarthenshire County Council in partnership with Pembrokeshire County Council, Neath Port Talbot Council and Swansea Council. • The amount of grant income outstanding to the Authority for European grant funded projects is continually monitored. Where there are delays in receiving the grant income the project manager is being contacted to follow up with the funding body or lead body where appropriate. • As the LINC project under the Rural Development Programme has ended an email to be sent to the project manager to ensure that closure procedures have been adhered to. The closure of 6 internal sub projects funded via the RDP LEADER Implementation project will be managed by the RDP LEADER team. 	RP

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8.0	<p data-bbox="363 286 641 320"><u>City Deal Update</u></p> <ul data-bbox="363 365 1177 2089" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="363 365 1093 517">• The Swansea Bay City Region Finance Manager attended the meeting to explain the financial mechanics in the award of City Deal funding to projects. <li data-bbox="363 562 1166 786">• Grant monies due from both UK and Welsh Governments will be received by the Authority on an agreed timeline. No monies will be paid to any project until the project's business case has been formally approved by both governments and legal agreements signed. <li data-bbox="363 831 1139 943">• Responsibility for delivering the individual business plans for each project lies with the respective local authority. <li data-bbox="363 987 1177 1323">• There are principal funding agreements between Carmarthenshire County Council as the accountable body and each project authority lead. For projects delivered locally and on a regional basis by Carmarthenshire County Council a Memorandum of Understanding will be in place. There are also secondary funding agreements between each project authority lead and partner delivery providers where applicable. <li data-bbox="363 1368 1145 1514">• The total grant to be managed by the Authority for the locally delivered projects and the regional projects led by Carmarthenshire is approximately £80m over 15 years. <li data-bbox="363 1559 1114 1671">• Grant monies relating to a specific project will be distributed based on actual spend quarterly in arrears. <li data-bbox="363 1715 1145 2018">• From a grant governance perspective the Authority needs to ensure that the key objectives outlined within each project's approved business plan and within the legal agreements are monitored and achievable to avoid the risk of any clawback of grant. However there is a change management policy in place to manage and mitigate any risk within the City Deal governance structure. <li data-bbox="363 2063 1139 2089">• The project's key objectives are categorised within 	

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	<p>three components which each determine the obligation of the Authority:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Outputs are specific to the agreed purpose of the City Deal funding ○ Outcomes e.g. GVA uplift (gross value added), jobs, training where Authority or the third party organisation delivering the project needs to ensure and can demonstrate that reasonable endeavours are made to achieve the outcomes ○ Impacts which are areas that cannot be quantified e.g. use of the welsh language, increase of skills as a result of training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● COVID 19 impact assessments have been undertaken on all projects to manage the impact on key objectives. This will be an ongoing undertaking for the foreseeable future. 	
9.0	<p><u>AOB</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Grants Management training undertaken in February 2021 was attended by 51 officers from the Environment and the Chief Executive’s Departments. A further 23 officers are due to undertake training in March 2021. ● Issues raised by officers attending the training sessions include the retention of original documentation for projects especially during the COVID 19 crisis. Funding body guidance to be checked to determine the options the Authority has in relation to document retention requirements. ● The PDG Access grant is currently used to provide school uniform and educational resources for eligible pupils. A variation letter is due to be received from WG to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ extend the school years for the provision of the school uniform and educational resources ○ broaden the range of purchases to include a laptop if the school cannot lend the family a device ○ the 2020/21 grant award to be extended to 30th June 2021 	<p>RP/DT</p> <p>RP/DT</p>

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	<p>On receipt of the variation letter a review to be undertaken on the current process for the award of the third party grant in conjunction with Internal Audit. Any revised procedures to be forwarded to WG for sign off.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The authority's Authorised Signatory list retained by Corporate Services has been updated by all departments to include those officers who have delegated authority to sign the grant acceptance. • Where grant acceptance letters require two authorised signatories it is recommended that one signatory would be from the department itself and the second signatory from Corporate Services. • Noted that all grant claims should be authorised by an appropriate officer of the Financial Services division who has delegated authority to sign claims even in instances where the claim doesn't specify that a finance signatory is required. • Any updates relating to the Shared Prosperity Fund will be presented in the next Grants Panel meeting. A consultation is also currently underway, being co-ordinated by the WLGA, on the future Rural Development Programme. 	
10.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Date of next meeting – 2:00pm on 7th June 2021 via Teams 	