

# AUDIT COMMITTEE

AC(2) 06-04(min)

## MINUTES

**Date:** 15 July 2004

**Time:** 9.30am to 12.30pm

**Venue:** Committee Room 3 & 4, Cardiff Bay

### Members

Janet Davies (Chair)  
Leighton Andrews  
Mick Bates  
Alun Cairns  
Jocelyn Davies  
Christine Gwyther  
Denise Idris-Jones  
Val Lloyd  
David Melding  
Carl Sargeant

### Attendance

South Wales West  
Rhondda  
Montgomeryshire  
South Wales West  
South Wales East  
Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire  
Conwy  
Swansea East  
South Wales Central  
Alyn and Deeside

### Witnesses

Sir Jon Shortridge  
David Richards  
Emyr Roberts  
Helen Usher

Permanent Secretary, National Assembly for Wales  
Principal Finance Officer, National Assembly for Wales  
Chief Executive, Welsh European Funding Office  
Head of Finance and Corporate Services Division, Welsh European Funding Office

### Officials

Sir John Bourn  
Gillian Body  
Ceri Thomas

Auditor General for Wales  
National Audit Office  
Assembly Compliance Office

### Secretariat

Siwan Davies

Committee Clerk

## **Item 1: Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest.**

1.1 The Chair welcomed Members, witnesses and members of the public to the meeting.

1.2 Apologies were received from Mark Isherwood for whom David Melding was substituting.

1.3 In respect of item 2, Leighton Andrews declared an interest as his wife was Director of BT Wales and Better Business in Wales, and Mick Bates declared an interest a Director of a company that had made an application for European Union Structural Funding.

## **Item 2: European Union Structural Funding: Progress on securing the benefits for Wales**

2.1 The Committee took evidence from Sir Jon Shortridge, Permanent Secretary, National Assembly for Wales, David Richards, Principal Finance Officer, National Assembly for Wales, Emyr Roberts, Chief Executive, Welsh European Funding Office and Helen Usher, Head of Finance and Corporate Services Division, Welsh European.

2.2 A verbatim transcript will be attached as Annex 1 to these minutes.

### Action

WEFO to provide a note to the Committee with the following information about the accessibility of match funding:

- the number of key funds for community economic regeneration, including those administered by local authorities and how many of the relevant local authorities are covered; and
- the number of organisations that have accessed funding under the Objective 3 programme as a result of a relaxation of the requirement of 10 per cent match funding by the public sector, especially voluntary and private sector organisations.

Drawing on this information, WEFO to consider issues of accessibility to match funding for community economic regeneration, particularly for Objective 3, and to advise the Committee of any problems that exist and what action is planned to overcome them.

The Committee adjourned from 10.42am until 11.00am, following which the evidence session continued.

## **Item 3: Welsh Assembly Government response to the Audit Committee report, 'Late Payments to Farmers in Wales'**

3.1 The Auditor General said that the Welsh Assembly Government had accepted all of the recommendations in the Committee report with the exception of recommendation 4, which it had partially accepted.

3.2 The Committee agreed to accept the Welsh Assembly Government response to its report, but to request an update on the outcome of the Assembly Government's review of the current levels of compensation, to be undertaken at the next meeting of all UK agriculture departments later in 2004.

#### Action point

Chair to write to the Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside to request an update on the outcome of the review of the current levels of compensation – Chair, Committee Service.

### **Item 4: Welsh Assembly Government response to the Audit Committee report, 'Renewal of Private Sector Housing in Wales'**

4.1 The Auditor General said that the Welsh Assembly Government had responded positively to the Committee's recommendations, particular those regarding the risk of fraud and the effective delivery of disabled facilities grant. It had made a commitment to provide an update on the current national housing survey and on progress in managing risks identified in the Auditor General's report. The Auditor General would report back to the Committee when these updates had been received.

4.2 The Committee agreed to accept the Welsh Assembly Government response to its report.

### **Item 5: Minutes of the previous meeting**

4.1 The Committee approved the Minutes of the 17 June 2004 meeting.

The Committee resolved to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 8.21(vi).

## **PRIVATE SESSION**

### **Item 6: To consider the draft Committee reports 'The Management of Sickness Absence by NHS Trusts in Wales' and 'Collections Management at the National Museums and Galleries of Wales'**

6.1 The Committee approved its reports 'The Management of Sickness Absence by NHS Trusts in Wales' and 'Collections Management at the National Museums and Galleries of Wales'.

6.2 The Committee noted that the Culture Committee would be considering the Government's response

to its report 'Collections Management at the National Museums and Galleries of Wales' in the autumn term, and would encourage other subject committees to follow up its reports.