

## **Appendix 2b: Other Audits and Grant Claims**

### **Disabled Facilities Grant**

#### **Purpose of Funding**

To support those in non-council properties with required adaptations to their homes based on their assessed needs. Types of works undertaken include installations of:

- level access showers
- ramped access to properties
- stair lifts.

#### **Themes**

Work undertaken confirmed that grant spend complied with the terms and conditions of the grant.

During the audit, opportunities were identified to strengthen DFG processes. These have been fed back to the service and are being addressed.

**Opinion: Unqualified**

### **Multiply Funding**

#### **Purpose of Funding**

To deliver targeted numeracy provision to adults aged 19 years and above, up to and including Level 2, boosting people's ability to use maths in their daily life at home and work – and enabling them to achieve a formal qualification that can open doors for them.

#### **Themes**

Work undertaken enabled confirmation of actual spend for the Year 1 claim to funders, following agreed adjustments arising from the audit.

Opportunities to improve financial controls and monitoring across SCC and Southend Adult Community College as deliverer of the scheme were identified. These have been fed back to the service and are being addressed.

**Opinion: Unqualified (Financial Claim)**

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### **Focal Point Gallery Arts Council Sound Grant**

#### **Purpose of Funding**

To deliver a year-long digital commissioning programme for artists and creative practitioners to deliver:

- 15 high-quality, innovative audio works, including spoken word, music, prose, field recordings and experimental sound. The commissions will be accompanied by 'Things You Never Get Taught'
- Two events with industry professionals, intended to demystify careers in sound production, with a particular focus on entry routes for women.
- Digifest, an annual artist-led festival of digital arts, featuring workshops, talks and screenings.

#### **Themes**

Work undertaken enabled confirmation of the total expenditure and income for the purposes of the final claim to funders.

**Opinion: Unqualified (Financial Claim)**

### **Local Transport Capital Block Funding - Integrated Transport**

#### **Purpose of Funding**

To assist in delivering small scale improvements to local transport networks, which can include:

- road markings and re-surfacing
- upgrades to traffic signals
- bridge strengthening
- installation / replacement of sign lights and street lights
- upgrades to electronic bus information screens.

#### **Conclusion**

It was confirmed that spend was compliant in that it:

- fell within the definition of "capital" for accounting purposes
- work undertaken related to the areas outlined above.

**Opinion: Unqualified**

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### **Local Transport Capital Block Funding - Highways Maintenance**

#### **Purpose of Funding**

To assist in delivering highway infrastructure asset management and road maintenance improvements to local transport networks.

#### **Conclusion**

It was confirmed that spend was compliant in that it:

- fell within the definition of "capital" for accounting purposes
- work undertaken related to the areas outlined above.

**Opinion: Unqualified**

### **Local Transport Capital Block Funding - Pothole Fund**

#### **Purpose of Funding**

Funding was provided to assist with plans to repair potholes across the city.

#### **Conclusion**

It was confirmed that spend was compliant in that:

- it fell within the definition of "capital" for accounting purposes
- work undertaken related to pothole repairs in the city.

**Opinion: Unqualified**

### **Supporting Families Programme - April 2023 to March 2024**

#### **Objective**

To assess compliance with the terms and conditions of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities relating to the claims for year April 2023 to March 2024 with the Supporting Families Programme Guidance 2022 to 2025.

#### **Background**

Up to 31 July 2023 Payments By Results (PBR) claims could be made on the six headline outcomes framework. Effective from 1 April 2023, a new outcomes framework has been implemented that includes ten headline outcomes enabling more detailed reporting on the problems families are facing, clarifying what looks good for these outcomes and what levels of evidence would be expected when measuring these outcomes.

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The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities outline that this next phase of the programme aims to see vulnerable families thrive, building their resilience by:

- providing effective, whole family support to help prevent escalation into statutory services;
- driving system change locally and nationally, working with local authorities and their partners to create joined up local services;
- identifying families in need, providing the right support at the right time, and tracking their outcomes in the long term.

The Council has agreed to achieve measurable outcomes with a minimum of 322 families assisted by March 2024 under this Programme.

Internal Audit are required to review a minimum of 10% of claims to ensure there is suitable evidence to support the payment by results claim.

### Summary and Conclusion of work

From April to September 2023, 55 of the PBR final claims for phase 2 of the programme were presented to audit, prior to submission to the DLUHC.

From October to December 2023, 70 supporting families claims were presented on the new outcomes in phase 3 of the programme, prior to submission to the DLUHC.

From January to March 2024, 99 supporting families claims were presented on the new outcomes in phase 3 of the programme, prior to submission to the DLUHC.

Internal Audit reviewed a sample of 10% of all cases, providing a representative sample of the claims outlined above. For all claims suitable evidence was available to support a claim for:

- entry into the programme; and
- a claim for significant and sustained progress against all problems identified at the point of engagement and during intervention.

### Opinion: Unqualified

### Risk Management

#### Objective

To support the council to embed robust assessment of risk and opportunity into decision making that encourages creativity, learning and improved outcomes.

#### Themes

The Council's Corporate Risk Register (CRR) sets out the key risks to the successful delivery of the Council's priorities and objectives and outlines the key management arrangements in place to mitigate and reduce the likelihood of the risks crystallising or maximise the likelihood of the opportunities being achieved.

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During 2023/24, Internal Audit supported the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) to review and update the format of the CRR to ensure that the information provided supported the informed decision making required to deliver successful services and transformational change.

Internal Audit facilitated a strategic risk identification workshop with CLT. This identified and assessed 11 strategic risks to the achievement of the Council's priorities.

The Risk Management Policy Statement and Strategy is being updated with the aim of ensuring that risk awareness and horizon scanning is business as usual.

Service plans were developed and included service area risk registers, identifying the key things that could happen that would have an impact on the delivery of the service's objectives. The service risk registers have been further developed during the 2024/25 service planning process.

Zurich, the Council's insurers, have made support for risk management arrangements available to SCC. It has been agreed that during 2024/25, Zurich will support the Council by providing:

- Enterprise Risk Management Health Check.
- Critical Friend / Framework Assessment.
- Risk Management Training and workshops.
- Training for Senior Officers and Elected members.

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### Southend Care Ltd

#### Objective

To provide an independent and objective analysis of the veracity of the Southend Care Limited (SCL) 2023/24 cost model and any financing gap to the Southend City Council (SCC) 2023/24 budget settlement proposal.

To compare the 2023/24 starting operating model to the company inception operating model and fair cost of care model(s) to aid understanding and validity of the contractual efficiency incentivisation mechanism and the steps to financial sustainability.

#### Themes

A number of areas for consideration were identified through the work undertaken, and included:

- the need to agree an early provisional settlement for 2023/24 in order to help cash flow to SCL and service delivery to the specified mix / standard
- SCC to undertake a review of the future type and depth of services required from SCL, to enable suitable delivery to the community
- Redesigning SCL's target operation model to ensure effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery
- The introduction of zero-based budgeting for SCL to help ensure the efficiency of budgets and achievement of value for money
- Adjust the contract between SCL and SCC to include clauses dealing with inflation and better reflect the specification of services to be delivered
- Introduction of a performance monitoring, reporting and management framework.