Ms Eilis Fallon  
Committee Secretariat  
Committee of Public Accounts  
Leinster House  
Dublin 2  

28/11/2019  

Ref PAC 32-I-1668  

Dear Ms Fallon,  

I refer to your letter of the 15th of November 2019 regarding the Financial Statements for Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETB) for 2018.  

In 2018 GRETB provided education and training courses for over 22,000 participants and beneficiaries. This included over 7,000 students in 20 post-primary schools and over 16,000 learners and beneficiaries on Further Education and Training programmes in 40 Centres. GRETB incurred expenditure of over €100 million which includes payroll costs of approximately €67m, to pay over 1900 employees.  

GRETB works continuously to ensure compliance with circulars, codes of governance and legislation. An ETB sectoral procurement policy, developed in conjunction with ETBI was implemented in GRETB in February 2018. Information on this policy was provided to management and budget holders involved in the procurement process.  

GRETB is fully committed to complying with procurement regulations and guidelines. However, given the nature of the organisation, with decentralised purchasing in 60 schools and centres across County Galway and County Roscommon, full compliance has been a challenge for GRETB. There are instances where goods and services have been procured locally in line with GRETB’s procurement policy but the aggregated value across all sites exceeds the national tendering threshold of €25,000. The bespoke out-of-date financial system in operation in GRETB also compounds matters, as there is no real-time information available in relation to purchases and it is difficult to establish the aggregated value of items without significant manual analysis of hundreds of expenditure codes (there are plans to replace this IT package with a national shared services system for ETBs).  

In 2018 the Procurement Unit in GRETB identified a number of areas that were over the national threshold once the expenditure across all of our sites were aggregated. Significant efforts have been made since then to ensure compliance in these areas. Details on progress in relation to the non-compliant areas referenced in your letter are set out in Appendix 1.
In addition, the ETBI/EP Corporate Procurement Plan (CPP) template and Multi-Annual Procurement Plan (MAPP) was launched in April 2019. GRETB has been working on its MAPP and further analysis of expenditure is being carried out to identify areas for drawdown from OGP and ETB Sectoral frameworks where available, or to conduct appropriate local tendering processes where a suitable OGP framework is not already in place.

GRETB are fully committed to complying with EU and national procurement regulations and guidelines, and are high users of central contracts through the OGP where a suitable one is available. All ETBs are supported in this by a central procurement support function in ETBI, which provides leadership and coordination of procurement reform within the sector.

Yours sincerely,

David Leahy
Chief Executive
Appendix 1

1. Class Materials across our 60 schools and centres
   a) Metalwork/Steel - expenditure of €44,473. A tender process has been conducted and contracts will issue shortly.
   b) Electrical Supplies for Training Courses - expenditure of €75,548. A tender process was conducted and a contract is in place.
   c) Woodwork supplies - expenditure of €77,715. A tender competition is presently being run and we expect to have the contract in place in the near future.
   d) Beauty course supplies - expenditure of €34,355. We are currently collating information for a tender competition.

2. Gas - expenditure of €34,135. A tender process was conducted and a contract is in place.

3. Maintenance
   a) Electrical maintenance - expenditure of €124,780
   b) Plumbing maintenance – expenditure of €62,908
   c) Painting – expenditure of €54,893
   d) Flooring – expenditure of €32,317
   GRETB is in the process of finalising a competition (tenders have been received and evaluated) for the appointment of contractors to carry-out various maintenance activities including electrical/plumbing and general maintenance, throughout the organisation.

4. Exam papers - expenditure of €69,888. A tender process was carried out and a panel for the supply of exam papers was formed.

5. School Diaries and Journals - expenditure of €38,902. A tender competition is presently being run and we expect to have the contracts in place in the near future.

6. IT consumables - expenditure of €47,962. GRETB is currently preparing a specification of requirements to conduct a tender competition.