

Llais Cymru - Board Meeting

Thursday 25 April 2024

**Venue: Sport Wales National Centre,
Sophia Gardens, Cardiff CF11 9SW**

Zoom Meeting

Meeting to start at 10am – 14:40

Members:

Medwin Hughes	Chair
Alyson Thomas	Chief Executive
Bamidele Adenipekun	Non-Executive
Jack Evershed	Non-Executive
Karen Lewis	Non-Executive
Rajan Madhok	Non-Executive
Jason Smith	Non-Executive
Mwoyo Makuto	Associate Member

Attendees:

Ben Eaton	Strategic Director of Organisational Strategy and Engagement
Richard Bevan	Interim Board Secretary and Head of Governance
Kirsty Contreras-Stacey	Governance Officer
Eleri Soanes	Administrative Support Officer
Jessica Mannings	PE/Monitoring & Scrutiny Management Officer
Erika Dunshaw	Advocacy Support Officer

Welcome, introductions, declarations of interest and apologies

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting.
- 1.2 Apologies were received from Grace Quantock (Deputy Chair), Barbara Harrington (Non-Executive), Angela Mutlow (Strategic Director of Operations and Corporate Services) and Alun Lloyd (Financial Support Officer).
- 1.3 No declarations or conflicts of interest were raised regarding the items on the agenda.

Minutes

- 2.0 The minutes of the board meeting held on 24 January 2024 were agreed as an accurate record.
- 2.1 The actions and decisions log were agreed, and progress noted.

Actions

- 3.0 The Chief Executive provided an update on the following outstanding actions:
 - A24-01-02 – **Workforce information on diversity of applicants:** Further work was being undertaken on the format of a workforce report and this information would be provided at the July 2024 meeting.
 - A22-01-12 – **Presentation from the Welsh Language Commissioner’s Office** – Arrangements were being made to receive a presentation on the experience of the Welsh Language Commissioner’s office following a cyber-attack. Once mutually convenient dates were identified, this would be confirmed for the Board.
 - A23-01-11 – **Llais’s complaints procedure** – the procedure was published in April 2023. It was made clear that should anyone wish to raise a concern about the actions of the former Board of Community Health Councils in Wales they were able to do so up to a year following the event. The date had now passed, and any

required amendments will now be made to the wording of the procedure.

- A23-03-09 – **Co-operation arrangements** – Work was ongoing with local authorities and NHS bodies to further develop cooperation arrangements nationally and regionally. Llais is currently working on a cooperation document that relates to services changes in the NHS. A draft document has been produced and is being considered by Tim Arwain. An update will be provided at the next Board meeting.
- A23-03-13 – **Security policy** - The Head of Digital Infrastructure is continuously reviewing the security policy and approach. A programme of continuous security evaluation and testing has been implemented. This work has been subject to Internal Audit and a report will be provided to the Audit Risk and Assurance Committee along with regular updates from the organisational lead.
- A23-05-02 – **IT Systems** – Implementation is ongoing and subject to regular review. This work has been subject to an Internal Audit and a report will be provided to the Audit Risk and Assurance.

CRM system – The CRM system went live at the end of February 2024 and is bedding in. The current focus is on the cultural change required across the organisation to get the best out of the system. It is expected that the new system will assist with access to the data and information Llais required more routinely with easier access.

- A23-05-06 – **Our first 100 days report** - It was reported that there is a real challenge with the production of Easy Read across Wales in terms of capacity, and Llais is discussing with colleagues who can provide in-house training so the organisation can provide training to our own staff.

Report from the Chair

4.0 The Chair noted the changes within Local Government following the recent appointment of a new First Minister. It was confirmed that the Cabinet Secretary for Culture and Social Justice was expected to be the Llais's sponsoring minister and a meeting is being sought with the Cabinet Secretary. There would also be a new link senior Civil

Servant in Sioned Evans, and confirmation of a first meeting date is awaited.

- 4.1 The Chair highlighted that after 12 months Llais continues to be clear in its remit to engage with and listen to the views of the public. A successful Strategic Plan launch event was held on the 24 April 2024. One of the key highlighted themes was the increase of the deprivation gap in Wales and the implications that has on health and wellbeing.
- 4.2 Excellent presentations were received which demonstrated integrated ways of working. The Chair emphasised that there was a real need to focus on the integrated activity of economic, social and health policy areas in order to deliver better outcomes for all.
- 4.3 Llais needs to make our statements and voices clear that improving health outcomes calls for integrated policy engagement across all key areas. Important to this would be the roles of the Regional Partnership Boards, especially regarding outcomes for children and young people and mental health and wellbeing support and services.
- 4.4 Llais needed to play a key role in representing the views of citizens in these meetings and ensure that Regional Partnership Boards actively engaged with Llais.
- 4.5 It was agreed the consultation from the Welsh Government focusing on Regional Partnership Boards would be shared with board members. Llais would submit a response and highlight its intention to engage with partners to highlight significant issues in health and social care and seek assurance about integrated approaches in response.

A24-04-01: The Board agreed that Llais would work collaboratively with its partners to prioritise a more integrated approach to health and social care.

Chief Executive's report

- 5.1 The Chief Executive introduced a report covering key activities undertaken since the last Board meeting.
- 5.2 Regarding Partnership working, it was reported that Audit Wales is carrying out a national review on cancer care in Wales and is seeking feedback from Llais inform its work.
- 5.3 Representatives of Llais had met with the Senedd Health & Social Care Research Team at an introductory meeting to discuss sharing respective plans and information. The team was keen to hear from Llais in terms of what we have heard about social care in particular.
- 5.4 The Chief Executive reported that a feature of the Llais' event on the 24 April 2024 had been our complaints advocacy service. Development work was being undertaken across Wales, and an all-Wales complaints event had taken place for advocates and advocacy support staff to look at further opportunities to develop the service and promote consistency across Wales.
- 5.5 The Chief Executive reported attendance at a Service Design in Practice show-and-tell event. 3 Llais staff members had attended a 6-month programme of learning around service design in practice to meet the needs of people from their perspective. The learning would assist in the design of Llais's systems. The Chief Executive congratulated all 3 members of staff for their commitment to this programme alongside their day jobs.
- 5.6 The Chief Executive reported that an all-Wales Llais staff event had been held. The event focused on Llais's Draft Strategic Plan as well as focusing on the Draft Behavioural standards. It was confirmed that the draft behavioural standards would be presented to the Board in July 2024. The proposed standards would also be shared with volunteers, to provide them with the opportunity to comment. The standards would be used to frame all Llais's ways of working, policies and procedures and governing all Llais's activities.
- 5.7 The Chief Executive confirmed that a visit had taken place to potential new office space for the Llais National and the Cardiff & the Vale Teams. It was on the 4th floor of Cathays Park, Welsh

Government Offices. The 4th floor space was being leased to a variety of public services.

- 5.8 It provided an opportunity to have modern facilities with access to a range of meeting rooms, IT infrastructure and good access. It would also present good value for money and a reduce annual cost. There had been some concerns expressed by staff and this will be further explored. Action would now be taken to formally consult with staff in partnership with trade unions on a potential move before making any proposals to Board.
- 5.9 It was confirmed that Llais representatives have been in continued conversation with the former Chief Emergency Ambulance Commissioner's team to set out continued concerns relating to the timing of a decision on the proposal to change the way the Emergency Medical Retrieval and Transfer Service is organised in Wales, by closing Air Ambulance bases in Powys and Northwest Wales and moving to a new base in North Wales.
- 5.10 We are concerned that a decision now would be premature without first helping people to understand more about related proposals to develop a bespoke road based service that would complement the Emergency Medical Retrieval and Transfer Service for people living in rural and remote areas in Wales. It had been confirmed that conversations would continue with Llais.
- 5.10 At the Llais Strategy launch event, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care announced the setting up of a national task group to review emergency department measures and patient experience. This will include the quality, value, experience, and outcome of care provided in emergency departments. It was anticipated that this would help to inform the Welsh public about what to expect when accessing these services and to help drive improvements. Llais is represented on the group.
- 5.10 It was confirmed that the Welsh Government is consulting on changes to the NHS complaints system called 'Putting things right'. The public consultation will gather views on the way concerns and complaints about NHS care are raised, investigated, and responded to. Llais is actively involved in this work and will respond to the consultation.

A24-04-02: The Chair thanked the Chief Executive for the update. The Board agreed that the Chief Executive, as part of the communications arrangements for Llais, would publish a monthly statement for the public to highlight the work of Llais and its key achievements and impacts.

Report from Board Committees:
- Remuneration and Terms of Service Committee
- Audit and Risk Assurance committee

Remuneration and Terms of Service Committee

- 6.1 An update on recent activity was provided on behalf of the Remuneration and Terms of Service Committee Chair by the Board Secretary/Head of Governance.

There had been no formal meeting of the committee in the last period, however there was one engagement via email which was a requirement to ratify a Welsh Government decision in relation to the annual uplift to the Chief Executive pay in line with national agreements. The Committee had ratified the uplift.

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

- 6.2 Karen Lewis, chair of the committee provided an update. The last formal meeting was held on 20 March 2024. It was attended by all members of the committee and representatives of internal audit, external audit, senior colleagues on the Executive Team in Llais, and the local counter fraud manager from the Shared Services Partnership.

The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee members were delighted to welcome two new Independent Members. John Baker and Anthony Pritchard were appointed in February 2024 to support the committee, and between them they brought a wealth of financial and cyber/IT knowledge and expertise to the work of the committee.

Key discussions at the meeting included an update from the local counter fraud service. Survey work had been undertaken with staff and it highlighted some need to further improve staff awareness

around fraud and a willingness to report instances of suspected fraud.

- 6.3 Further work was required on standing financial instructions and financial procedures and some of the work was being undertaken out of committee. It was agreed that the Financial Governance Adviser and Interim Board Secretary would be undertaking the work and reporting back at the next committee in June 2024.
- 6.4 The corporate risk register was reviewed, and it was noted that the interim Board Secretary would be undertaking a review on the organisational risk approach and reporting arrangements at both committee and board levels.
- 6.5 The financial position in month 11 was looked at and it was noted there was a significant underspend which was not where the organisation had planned to be, however much of it was related to posts not being appointed.

An annual report working group is preparing the end of year reports that would be presented to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee in June 2024. An agreement was reached with committee members that there would be additional meetings in July and August to sign off anything that was required.

- 6.6 An in-person meeting took place in Swansea on 21 March 2024 to review the work of the Committee in its first year and develop a plan for the coming year. Key areas were identified for development and an action plan had been developed. The committee would be working closely with the interim Board Secretary to take the plan forward.
- 6.7 It was confirmed the next committee meeting is scheduled for the 19 June 2024 and in advance of the meeting it had been agreed that a 30-minute meeting would be held with the internal and external auditors.
- 6.8 The Chief Executive confirmed that Llais had commissioned external support to work on the development of our business continuity plans and confirmed the individual had significant experience in working in this area.

- 6.9 The Chair asked the interim Board Secretary/Head of Governance whether that he was content with the capacity to deliver in all areas of work he is commissioned to complete. The interim Board Secretary confirmed that Kirsty Contreras-Stacey joined the organisation as Governance officer, and it was confirmed that he had every confidence in Kirsty taking work forward in the coming weeks and months. The timelines for the areas of development work would be kept under review alongside fulfilling the day-to-day governance and business requirements of Llais.
- 6.10 The Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee expressed her thanks to the interim Board Secretary/Head of Governance for the vast amount of work and support provided already for the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and his expertise is extremely valued.

Health & Social Care Services in Cardiff & the Vale of Glamorgan

- 7.1 The Chief Executive made the Health & Social Care Services Presentation and thanked colleagues in Cardiff & Vale region for their help in developing the presentation. Jessica Mannings and Erika Dunshaw were welcomed to the meeting. It was explained that Helen Williams who was providing cover for the Regional Director role in the region was not able to attend the board meeting.
- 7.2 Firstly the Chief Executive thanked the staff of the Cardiff and Vale region for their patience and hard work especially over the past few months as a new Regional Director was recruited.
- 7.3 The focus of the region's work has been on key priorities in the following areas:
- Cancer services
 - Maternity services
 - Staff capacity issues
 - Engaging with underrepresented groups
 - How to attract more volunteers.

There is also a focus on unpaid carers, consistent with other regions across Wales. Llais is talking to other organisations across Wales to build stronger partnerships.

There are 3 regional priorities:

- having a baby
- living with cancer
- getting care and treatment quickly.

In terms of cancer services, there had been visits undertaken to Velindre Cancer Centre, and the regional team is working with other organisations such as Maggie's and MacMillan Cancer Care to share information and learn from them.

There is currently a live survey on getting care and treatment quickly.

A dental secret shopper service was also live.

The Llais regional team's work on maternity services follows up on earlier identified issues in maternity care. Healthcare Inspectorate Wales had previously inspected this service and its report, which was published last year raised concerns about services within the ethnic communities. The Llais regional team will follow up on this in its work. The Interim Regional Director had reached out to the communities to obtain feedback on the services.

- 7.4 The Chair thanked all staff and volunteers of the region for their continued support and hard work.

New remit letter and framework document

- 8.1 The Chief Executive confirmed that Llais was awaiting the updated remit letter and framework document to be issued by the Welsh Government.

Report from the Strategic Plan Launch Event – 24 April 2024

- 9.1 The Chair highlighted the great success of the Strategic Plan launch event and thanked all involved in preparing for the meeting.

Ben Eaton confirmed 180 people were in attendance, which was very positive. The Board agreed it was good to have heard from the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care. Thanks were extended to all the speakers, board members and all Llais staff. Rajan Madok asked if there had been any feedback from the launch event. It was confirmed that feedback had been sought on the event, and an evaluation report will be developed. The Chair commented that it will be important and valuable to share the feedback from the event with partners and the public.

- 9.2 The Chief Executive confirmed that there were a number of helpful suggestions from staff on the ground on how they can work together and with other organisations and interests.
- 9.3 The Chair asked how are the conversations that are already taking place going to be mapped. It was explained that it was part of the first priority of the plan to map engagements, especially to identify any gaps and what could be done to encourage further engagements. The Chair had committed to a 6-month timeline for a Teams seminar to be held and it would be good practice to undertake this follow up with attendees and other interested groups.
- 9.4 The Chair once again encouraged the issuing of a monthly statement of engagement of areas that Llais were actively involved in across Wales.

Annual Plan 2024/2025

- 10.1 The draft Annual Plan for 2024/2025 was discussed. Ben Eaton confirmed that the integrated impact assessment undertaken for the Strategy was also being used for the Annual Plan. The Annual Plan would also be discussed at the next Audit and Risk Assurance Meeting in June 2024.
- 10.2 Ben Eaton confirmed that the plan included a commitment to increase our engagement in the coming year by at least 25%. The plan included a range of key areas of activity, including:
- a Mapping Exercise to understand the conversations that are happening across Wales.
 - Teaming up with the Bevan Commission.
 - Regions to hold round table events/fora.

- Engagement and involvement in proposals to change the way health and social care services are provided
- Behavioural framework
- Communications strategy
- Engagement framework
- Digital inclusion. Ben Eaton confirmed Llais would be signing up to the Digital Inclusion Charter.

10.3 The Board welcomed and approved the Annual Plan 2024/2025.

Break for Lunch return 1pm

Finance Report

- 11.1 The finance report was presented to the Board by the Chief Executive.
- 11.2 The report outlined to the Board the end of year financial position on the 31 March 2024 (Month 12). The Financial Plan 2023/24 had set out how Llais planned to meet the financial duty to ensure that net expenditure did not exceed the net revenue resource budget.
- 11.3 There was an underspend which was higher than anticipated. At month 12 the financial performance for the financial year was a total underspend of £177k against delegated budgets (this was an increase on the Month 9, year-end forecast underspend of £75k). The Month 11 Finance Report, presented at the March 2024 Audit, Risk and Assurance committee meeting, included a year end forecast underspend of £139k.

The underspend was mainly due to the delay in recruiting staff. The original estimates were based on an assumption that staff would be recruited into roles by the end of July 2023, however delays in the recruitment process meant that staffing structures might not be fully filled until at least July 2024.

The Chief Executive confirmed that in depth work was continuing to further develop our financial planning and control arrangements focusing on budget holders, delegation of budgets and their responsibilities. These are set out in budget holder allocation letters and financial training and support is provided, if required. A new Director of Governance and Finance would start

soon, and the Chief Executive had identified as one of the key objectives for the role was to review the financial reporting arrangements and to look at regional areas of budget setting.

- 11.4 The final annual budget allocation for 2024/2025 was currently being discussed with Welsh Government and Llais is awaiting the final budget letter, which is expected to be issued in the coming weeks. The Chief Executive confirmed that planning discussions have started earlier this year on the basis of assumptions of our budget allocation. A key point of learning for Llais related to procurement activities and that procurement processes required to start much earlier to meet budget responsibilities, especially near year end.

Workforce report

- 12.1 The Chief Executive provided an update to the Board on the progress regarding key workforce matters. This included recruitment, learning and development, skills and behaviours framework, organisational development activity and the Voluntary Early Release Scheme.
- 12.2 In terms of learning and development it was recognised that there needed to be a continued focus on the development and delivery of a comprehensive learning programme for volunteers. This will follow on from the roll out of a social care awareness learning programme for volunteers, which was underway and had been received positively.
- 12.3 Llais recruitment – There are several roles that are at varying stages of pre-employment checks and start dates are being agreed. There are a few roles at interview stage and two roles awaiting evaluation - the new Board Secretary role and the Insight and Engagement Officer roles.
- 12.4 Work is underway to develop a new skills framework for Llais staff to enable the organisation to identify skill gaps and enable us to fill those gaps through a comprehensive learning and development programme. Staff are actively involved in this work.

- 12.5 A tender exercise is underway to commission a bespoke programme of learning for staff about working in the social care sector. In the meantime, our staff have been offered the opportunity to join the volunteer social care awareness training sessions.
- 12.6 Succession planning arrangements and approaches were also needed to support ongoing development of our staff structures, but also to provide resilience and business continuity should key members of staff be absent.
- 12.7 The Board noted the report and agreed that a dashboard style report should be developed for reporting to the Board going forward.

Board effectiveness review and objectives for 2024/25

- 13.1 The Interim Board Secretary/Head of Governance confirmed that the Board met at the end of February 2024 to discuss and review its own effectiveness as a Board, as required by Standing Orders. It is also good practice for the Board to reflect and review annually how it has discharged its roles and responsibilities.
- 13.2 Following a review, which had been independently facilitated, 6 Key objectives had been agreed. These were:
- Developing the Board Assurance Framework.
 - Conducting deep dives at Committee level to provide additional assurance to Board, as appropriate.
 - Clarifying the role of the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee and further supporting skills development of its members.
 - Developing guidance and providing further support to staff presenting at Board level.
 - Board members to attend engagement events for further assurance on activity taking place, especially in areas where they held a regional ambassadorial role.
 - Further developing the reporting mechanisms and templates for Board and Committees. This will be supported by the agreement of a new Governance and Assurance Framework.
- 13.3 The Board agreed the objectives and that the objectives would be converted into a programme of work which would be implemented during the coming year.

Governance & assurance report & forward plan

14.1 The Interim Board Secretary/Head of Governance noted that the Governance & Assurance report outlined the key strands of work that were ongoing. In undertake the review work, he was confident that the governance essentials were in place for the organisation.

14.2 It was suggested that it had been helpful for Llais to have engaged Eversheds Sutherland to undertake an independent check of requirements and arrangements. That report was received at the end of March 2024. This is now being used to inform governance and assurance review work.

14.3 It is important that Governance & Assurance arrangements are kept under constant review to ensure the organisation is operating effectively and enables Llais to operate with confidence.

14.4 The Interim Board Secretary/Head of Governance highlighted that currently the organisation did not have a procedure for the use of a common seal – to seal legal documents. A temporary process was presented for Board approval, which would be incorporated into the Standing Orders. It was explained that this was required urgently to enable signing of a new lease for one of the Regional Offices.

14.5 The Board approved the temporary process to be implemented.

Corporate risk report

15.1 The Board was provided with a summary of the Risk Report by the Interim Board Secretary/Head of Governance which provided an update on progress against each of the risks within the Corporate Risk Register.

15.2 It was agreed that a new Risk Report was to be developed in a dashboard style register. This would be presented to the July 2024 Board meeting.

A24-04-03: The Board agreed that a new dashboard style Corporate Risk Report/Register would be developed and presented to the July 2024 Board.

Any other business

16.1 No further business was identified for discussion.

Forward look & Board work plan

17.1 The forward look & Board work plan was discussed and approved. It was noted that there would be 5 meetings during 2024/2025 and it was agreed that there would be 6 Board Meetings per year from 2025/26.

Questions from the public

18.1 The Chair noted that no questions had been received from members of the public.

The meeting closed 14.40pm