

Item: 13

Title: Our office locations

Gweithredu / Action required	Noting
Amseru / Timing	Routine
Argymhelliad / Recommendation	That the Board notes the update on Llais premises.
Risg / Risk	<p>A failure to secure alternative premises for the Powys (Brecon) and Neath Port Talbot regional offices would leave our staff without an office base, limiting the efficiency and ability of the teams to deliver our functions accessibly across the region.</p> <p>Failing to investigate alternative premises for the national team and Cardiff & Vale of Glamorgan offices would represent a missed opportunity to reduce costs, support the wider public sector and increase the accessibility of our premises for staff and visitors.</p> <p>A failure to secure alternative premises for the West Wales (Carmarthen) team would result in continued business continuity disruption and costs associated with flood risks, and would represent a missed opportunity to reduce costs, support the wider public sector and increase the accessibility of our premises for staff and visitors.</p>
Cyllid / Finance	All associated costs are detailed within the report.
Amcan Cynllun Corfforaethol / Corporate Plan Objective	The recommendations will enable Llais to meet the commitments in our statement of policy on accessibility.
Cydraddoldeb / Equality	An integrated impact assessment is underway for all potential moves. A complete assessment for the Carmarthen office move is included as an attachment to this paper.

Cyfathrebu / Communications	Please tick one of the following boxes if this activity will have an impact on: Internal: our people <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> External: our customers/partners/stakeholders <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> External: our organisation's reputation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Cymeradwyaeth / Approval/Clearance	This paper has been cleared by the Chief Executive.
Trafodaethau/ Penderfyniadau Blaenorol / Previous discussions/decisions	The Llais Board has received regular updates on all Llais premises.
Awdur/ Cyflwyno / Author/presenting	Angela Mutlow
Dyddiad / Date	12 July 2024

Cefndir / Background

NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership provides us with professional property advice and support to enable us to secure and manage our lease arrangements.

The Board previously agreed to transfer all Community Health Council office leases over to Llais on the 1 April 2023. This decision enables continuity of services for people living in all parts of Wales.

It also allows time for us to develop a location strategy that can support the delivery of our longer-term vision, mission and strategy, as well as reflect and respond to wider public sector developments aimed at supporting more flexible ways of working - increasing accessibility and reach into local communities, as well as make better use of the Welsh public sector estate.

Since this time, the Board have agreed to sign 2 short term office leases and have requested that work is undertaken to look for a number of new premises.

Work is underway to identify alternative office space for a number of Llais regions so that we can increase the accessibility of our office space for our people and visitors, reduce identified risks with our current office premises, secure year-on-year savings in our accommodation costs, and respond to advance notification from existing landlords of a need to vacate our current accommodation in some regions.

Our office space is mainly used as a staff workspace, as well as providing spaces to meet with our volunteers and wider partners. We may also use the space to support

discussions with our complaints advocacy clients, although this use is less frequent, as our clients usually choose to receive our service in other ways.

As part of our commitment to increasing our accessibility, our focus is on being accessible within our local communities through outreach arrangements, rather than expecting people to have to travel to see us in our offices. As a result, meetings with our clients may take place in a range of accessible spaces, including, where needed, home visits.

Manylion / Detail

Offices with continuing leases

Cwm Taf Morgannwg

We continue to hold the lease over for this office. Although the lease is now out of contract, there is security of tenure on the existing lease.

We have been advised that there is a risk that the costs would increase significantly if we entered into a new contract at this time.

Gwent

The new lease for the Gwent office was signed on the 18 June 2024. The lease will end on the 31 March 2026.

North Wales (Wrexham)

The new lease for the Wrexham office was signed on the 23 May 2024. The lease will end on the 31 March 2026.

North Wales (Bangor)

We continue to hold the lease over for this office. Although the lease is now out of contract, there is security of tenure on the existing lease.

We have been advised that there is a risk that the costs would increase significantly if we entered into a new contract at this time.

West Wales (Milford Haven)

We continue to hold the lease over for this office. Although the lease is now out of contract, there is security of tenure on the existing lease.

We have been advised that there is a risk that the costs would increase significantly if we entered into a new contract at this time.

Offices where new arrangements are being explored

Cardiff & Vale of Glamorgan & national team

The Cardiff and Vale team are currently based in the Llanishen area of Cardiff, and the national team are based on Cathedral Road in Cardiff.

The Cardiff and Vale team have been based in their office for 8 years and the national team have been based in their office for 11 years.

There are 12 members of staff based in the Cardiff and Vale office and 14 members of staff based in the Cathedral Road office.

Both leases are out of contract, and both have security on tenure.

Both offices have limitations in meeting our operational needs, in particular with regard to their accessibility for staff, volunteers, members of the public, and our partners. Work is currently underway to consider alternative office accommodation that could co-locate both teams in one space.

In line with the requirements of our Organisational Change Policy, in partnership with our recognised trades unions a staff consultation is underway. Through the consultation exercise we are looking in detail at 2 possible office locations.

Neath Port Talbot and Swansea

Our lease for the Neath Port Talbot and Swansea office comes to an end on 31 March 2025. There is no security of tenure within the lease, and the existing landlords have recently advised that that it does not want to continue to lease the space after the end of this lease period.

A search is currently underway to identify alternative office space in the region.

Powys (Brecon)

We have been told that the existing building where we rent office space in Brecon will close in the New Year. Talks are going ahead with the existing landlord to see if it will be possible to move into their new premises, as well as looking for other options in the area.

West Wales (Aberystwyth)

We currently rent a small dedicated office space in the Welsh Government building in Aberystwyth. This was previously used by one of our part time staff members who lived in the area. This staff member has now left Llais, and so the dedicated office space is not regularly used. Meetings that may take place at the building with partners or members of the public take place in the public areas or in pre-bookable rooms on site.

As part of our discussions on the potential office move in Carmarthen, we have discussed changing our lease arrangements for Aberystwyth which would mean we could continue to use the pre-bookable meeting rooms and ground floor public spaces at no cost.

West Wales – Carmarthen

The Carmarthen team are currently based in the Old Station area of Carmarthen. They have been based in the current office for around 12 years. 12 members of staff are based there. The building is located in an area that has flooded more frequently in recent years. This has affected the building itself, disrupting access and facilities and creating increased risk as insurance cover is not provided within the existing lease arrangements.

The Public Services building in Carmarthen has been identified as a potential new office site. No other appropriate offices have been identified.

There are a number of advantages that have been identified so far about a possible move to the identified building. These include:

- Sufficient free car parking
- Accessible to the public
- Open plan office environment
- Private telephone pods
- Strong Wi-Fi connections
- Shared facilities, e.g., photocopying, shedder, and recycling facilities
- Dedicated storage space for staff to store personal belongings

- Rest room
- Large and small meeting rooms with an option to book various other meetings rooms throughout the building
- Good security arrangements
- Significant cost savings.

Staff consultation

In line with the requirements of our Organisational Change Policy, in partnership with our recognised trades unions we ran a staff consultation for 4 weeks. As part of this process, all staff were provided with a copy of the Organisational Change policy, and initial outline business case.

A visit to the site was arranged and a number of staff took the opportunity to see the premises. Throughout the process staff were able to ask questions which were answered weekly through a Frequently Asked Questions document.

Staff asked that the consultation be closed one week early as no concerns were identified about the potential move.

A copy of the outline business case shared with staff as part of the consultation can be found at Appendix A. An integrated impact assessment has been carried out with staff involvement. This is at Appendix B. These will continue to be updated. The frequently asked questions raised and responded to during the staff consultation is at Appendix C. An initial estimate and comparison of costs has been prepared, and more detailed work is continuing.

Engagement with our Carmarthenshire based volunteers on the possible move is also underway.