

Llais Cymru - Board Meeting

Wednesday 24 July 2024

**Venue: Ty Newydd Hotel, Penderyn Rd, Hirwaun,
Aberdare CF44 9SX**

Zoom Meeting

Members:

Medwin Hughes	Chair
Alyson Thomas	Chief Executive
Bamidele Adenipekun	Non-Executive
Barbara Harrington	Non-Executive
Jack Evershed	Non-Executive
Grace Quantock	Deputy Chair
Karen Lewis	Non-Executive
Rajan Madhok	Non-Executive
Jason Smith	Non-Executive

Attendees:

Alun Lloyd	Finance Governance Adviser (online)
Angela Mutlow	Director of Operations
Ben Eaton	Strategic Director of Organisational Strategy and Engagement
Joanne Bolton	Strategic Director of Operations and Corporate Services
Richard Bevan	Interim Board Secretary
Kirsty Contreras-Stacey	Governance Officer
Eleri Soanes	Administrative Support Officer (online)

Welcome, introductions, declarations of interest and apologies

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting and extended a warm welcome to Joanne Bolton (Strategic Director of Operations and Corporate Services) and Ruth Thomas (member of the public). The chair also welcomed all those who were joining the meeting online.
- 1.2 Apologies were received from Mwoyo Makuto (Associate Member)
- 1.3 No declarations or conflicts of interest were raised regarding the items on the agenda.

Minutes

- 2.0 The minutes of the extraordinary board meeting held on 22 April and the public board meeting held on 24 April 2024 were agreed and accepted as an accurate record.

Actions

- 3.0 The Interim Board Secretary provided an update on the action sheet and the Board noted the updates and any outstanding actions:

A24-04-01 – **Partnership working** - The Board agreed that Llais would work collaboratively with its partners to prioritise a more integrated approach to health and social care over the next 6 months and this would be reflected in Llais's response to the current Welsh Government consultation.

A24-04-02 – **Communications Monthly Statement** - 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.

A23-03-09 – **Cooperation Arrangements** - Work with local authorities and NHS bodies to further develop the cooperation arrangements document was progressing and a report would be made at a future meeting.

- A24-01-02 – **Workforce information on diversity of applicants:** Further work was being undertaken on the format of a workforce

dashboard report and this information would be provided at the September 2024 meeting.

The actions and decisions log were agreed, and progress noted.

Report from the Chair

- 4.0 The Chair confirmed that Llais had listened to representations at the Royal Welsh Show and were involved in discussion regarding health outcomes across Wales.
- 4.1 The Chair highlighted that Llais was continuing its engagement with the communities and key interests across Wales and would continue to develop its community engagement activity.
- 4.2 Excellent presentations at the Royal Welsh were received which demonstrated integrated ways of working. The Chair emphasised that there was a continuing need to focus on the integrated activity of economic, social and health policy areas in order to deliver better outcomes for all.

The Chair emphasised that Llais needed to continue to highlight the importance of improving health outcomes and call for integrated policy and 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. 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.

- 4.3 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.

A24-07-01 – Chief Executive to submit a response to the Welsh Government 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.

Chief Executive's report

- 5.1 The Chief Executive introduced a report covering key activities undertaken since the last Board meeting.
- 5.2 It was highlighted that healthcare summit meetings were most important and helpful forums, and it is imperative that Llais were consistently involved with all partners.
- 5.4 The Chief Executive confirmed that the current Older People's Commissioner would be standing down at the end of July 2024, and Llais would continue to work closely with the new Older People's Commissioner for Wales, Rhian Bowen-Davies.
- 5.5 The Chief Executive reported concerns regarding the 24-hour Midwifery Council helpline. Conversations were continuing and the professional standards authority was now involved.
- 5.6 It was reported that the current performance of emergency departments and the experiences of citizens who struggled to access timely services and the challenges of health service organisations to respond to levels of demand would need to inform the development of new measures.
- 5.7 It was confirmed that Llais representatives have been in continued conversation with the former Chief Emergency Ambulance Commissioner's team regarding the Emergency Medical Retrieval and Transfer Service in Wales to represent the views of citizens. It was noted that there had been agreement and had to change some of the bases.
- 5.8 The Chair asked whether or not the role of Llais was understood well enough in partner public bodies. It was recognised it was improving with positive examples of Llais being recommended to patients and service users. It was explained that work was ongoing to raise the profile of Llais. Work was underway to create an introductory e-learning resource with Health Education and Improvement Wales for use with public bodies in their induction and ongoing education/training processes. Noted the report of the Chief Executive.

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

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

- 6.1 Karen Lewis, chair of the committee provided an update from the last formal meeting of the committee held on 19 June 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.
- 6.2 The committee had considered and endorsed a range of governance documentation, which had now been submitted to the Board for approval. It has been agreed that further work was required on standing financial instructions and financial procedures prior to submission to the Board for approval and this had been completed outside of the committee in readiness for the Board. It was explained that Internal Auditors shared their findings on 4 reports that had been completed; all of which had provided 'reasonable' assurance. Also, the Head of Internal Audit Report was also submitted, which also provided an overall position of 'reasonable' assurance for Llais's first operational year. This would now be included in the organisation's governance statement. Karen Lewis also expressed thanks to the Chief Executive and team for their hard work in achieving this positive position.
- 6.3 Karen Lewis also highlighted that there were some IT/Cyber Issues raised as part of the risk report and discussion and this had been shared with Ben Eaton (Strategic Director of Organisational Strategy and Engagement) as lead for this area. A further report would be submitted to the next meeting of the committee in September following further work and advice and support from one of the committee's independent members.
- 6.4 It was confirmed that work was progressing well with the development of the draft annual report and accounts and that a further meeting was scheduled for the 31 July. The report was in the final draft stage and would be submitted to Audit Wales by the end of August in line with requirements.

Use of the Common Seal

- 7.1 The Interim Board Secretary presented a paper on the use of the common seal and confirmed that the common seal had been used twice since implementation of the addition to standing orders as agreed at the April meeting. The Board ratified the report.

The work of our national team

- 8.1 The Strategic Director of Organisational Strategy and Engagement provided a presentation to the board on the work of the national team, impacts and operations. It was well received by the board and provided an insight of Llais and its operations.

An overview of our impact and operations

- 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 would be developed. The Chair commented that it would 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 could work together and with other organisations and interests.
- 9.3 The Chair asked how were the conversations that were 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 suggested the issuing of a monthly statement on engagement of the areas that Llais were actively involved in across Wales.

Volunteer Strategy

- 10.1 The volunteer strategy was presented by Ben Eaton (Strategic Director of Organisational Strategy and Engagement) and discussed, and it was agreed it was important that Llais engaged with volunteers, staff and most importantly communicate publicly.
- 10.2 It was confirmed that Llais were going to explore the option of working in partnership with other organisations to enhance volunteering throughout the Llais organisation.

The Board approved the volunteer strategy for implementation.

Review and updated standing orders

- 11.1 The Interim Board Secretary presented the reviewed and updated standing orders. The new standing orders had received scrutiny through the audit and risk assurance committee. The Board approved the standing orders.

A24-07-02 - It was agreed that the standing orders would be posted to the Llais website and that awareness raising with staff would be undertaken to development understanding and compliance.

Reviewed and updated schedule of matters reserved for board approval

- 12.1 The Interim Board Secretary presented a reviewed and redeveloped schedule of matters reserved for board approval only. It was explained that it was good practice to keep these under regular review and they had also been redeveloped as part of the ongoing governance review.

It was confirmed that should Llais not regularly review its Schedule of Matters Reserved for Board approval, as part of its wider governance arrangements, it would risk operating without the most up to date position for one of its key governance documents. This

would pose the risk of Llais operating or making decisions that did not meet its required statutory requirements.

The Board approved the new schedule. It was agreed that the schedule would be published and that awareness raising would also be undertaken along with the new standing orders.

A24-07-03 – Posting of Schedule of matters reserved - It was agreed that the schedule of matters reserved would be posted to the Llais website

Committee framework and Terms of Reference for committees

- 13.1 The Interim Board Secretary presented to the Board updated terms of reference for the audit and risk assurance committee and proposed newly developed terms of reference for the establishment of a Workforce, Remuneration and Terms of Service Committee.
- 13.2 The updated terms of reference for the audit and risk assurance committee had been developed following the committee and Board's effectiveness reviews earlier in the year. The updated terms of reference reflected the changes agreed to the scope of business for the committee and the interface with the new workforce, remuneration and terms of service committee.
- 13.3 It was confirmed that the terms of reference for the workforce, remuneration and terms of service committee were completely new to reflect the role of the committee covering wider workforce matters, matters relating to equity, diversity and inclusion, the incorporation into the committee of the responsibilities of the former remuneration and terms of service committee and also highlighted the requirement for the committee to meet more frequently.
- 13.4 The Board approved the establishment of a workforce, remuneration and terms of service committee and approved the proposed terms of reference. The Board also approved the revised terms of reference for the audit and risk assurance Committee.

It was confirmed that the first meeting of the workforce, remuneration and terms of service committee would take place in the autumn and that it would meet four times a year.

Llais office moves and arrangements

14.1 The Director of Operations reported that 3 staff consultations were in progress regarding potential relocation of Llais offices and the associated staff members. This was in line with the organisation's commitment to review tenancy arrangements to ensure that the current locations continued to meet the needs of the organisation and offer appropriate facilities for our staff and the public when accessing our services. The 3 regions currently engaged in the process are:

- West Wales, Carmarthen Office – The consultation started 20 June 2024 and the consultation ended early at the request of the staff, confirming they were content with the proposal.
- Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan region – consultation commenced June 28 and is scheduled to run for four weeks. An update will be provided at the September 2024 board meeting.
- National team – consultation commenced July 3 and is scheduled to run for four weeks.

All affected staff have been offered the opportunity to participate in the consultation and visit the proposed new locations. Trades Union colleagues have attended each launch event, and all staff questions and answers have been collated anonymously and circulated to staff weekly.

In relation to the Powys region, Brecon Office, potential move, this will now start later than originally planned as additional potentially suitable sites have been identified and need to be fully evaluated to see if they can be considered.

Any moves are being conducted under the Organisational Change Policy. This will ensure that staff who incur any additional costs as a result of any agreed move will be re-imbursed in line with the policy.

Communications strategy

15.1 The communications strategy was presented to the board by the Strategic Director of Organisational Strategy and Engagement.

The Communication Strategy sets out our strategic intent for Llais communications for the period 2024-2027.

It has been developed and informed by engagement with people and communities, our staff and volunteers, our stakeholders and what the organisation has learned over our first year of operation.

The Communication Strategy will underpin the ongoing work of developing the internal and external communication plan, which will consider and deliver an effective programme of how we communicate impact, and with an emphasis on “closing the loop” with people and communities so they are aware what impact their involvement has had on services.

The Strategy and Plans will also prioritise communication with underrepresented groups, so that Llais communicates in a way that works best for all areas of Wales.

The Board thanked colleagues for the significant amount of work that has been undertaken in the development of the strategy. The Board approved the strategy for implementation.

Gender pay gap report

16.1 The gender pay gap was presented to the board and confirmed that this is Llais’s first gender pay gap statement since our organisation was launched on 1 April 2023.

In this pay statement, gender has been reported in a binary way, that only recognises males and females. This follows UK government guidance on gender pay reporting.

We know that there are many people who do not identify in a way that fits into a binary category and that this reporting does not take them into account.

There are currently 102 staff members, 89 females and 13 males. This means that for every male member of staff working at Llais, there are 7 females.

The gender pay gap was presented to the board, discussed and agreed.

Draft financial plan 2024/2025 & Finance update report

- 17.1 The finance report was presented to the board by the Chief Executive.
- 17.2 The Finance Governance Adviser confirmed the final annual budget allocation for 2024/2025 was currently being discussed with Welsh Government and Llais was awaiting the final budget letter, which was expected to be issued in the coming weeks. The Chief Executive confirmed that planning discussions had started earlier in the year on the basis of assumptions of our budget allocation.
- 18.1 It was reported that financial performance at month 3 was an underspend, which was higher than anticipated. At the end of June was £144,713, of which £120,130 was the net pay underspend, less utilisation transferred to contingencies. In June it was £38,389, inclusive of £46,846 net pay underspend less utilisation transferred to contingencies.
- 18.2 It was noted that the underspend to date was based on the key funding assumptions as per the interim financial Plan. If funding was not forthcoming, as per the assumptions, the financial position would significantly worsen. While the performance to date was an underspend the forecast outturn was only a £1k underspend – reflecting spend profiles over the next 3 quarters.
- The Chief Executive confirmed that in depth work was continuing to further develop the financial planning and control arrangements focusing on budget holders, delegation of budgets and their responsibilities.

Review and updated standing financial instructions

- 19.1 Revised and updated standing financial instructions were presented to the Board following endorsement by the audit and risk assurance committee. The standing financial instructions (SFIs) were originally developed and adopted in February 2023. Review work had been undertaken and a range of additions and amendments were outlined. These included:

The Amendment to payment approval limits was approved by Board April 2023

- Amendment to payment approval limits – Regional Operations Managers and Directors.
- Amendment to cash flow forecasting – from quarterly to monthly
- Amendment to capital definition – to align with accounting policies in 2023/24 Annual Accounts.
- Deleted - Security of Monies and Valuables as cheques not used

The Board approved the updated standing financial instructions and agreed that these would be published and awareness raising activity undertaken with staff to promote compliance.

Workforce report

20.1 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 and organisational development activity.

20.2 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.

In relation to social care training, it was reported that unfortunately the awarding of the contract for this has been delayed due to issues with the tender and the Strategic Director of Operations, Corporate Services and the Director of People, Well-being and OD were working closely with the procurement department to try and resolve these as soon as possible.

Statutory and mandatory e-learning remained an issue with staff not being able to access modules via the Electronic Staff Record and being able to download any data relating to the completion rates of these module. The error could not be rectified by NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership and the platform providers were now investigating the issue as a matter of urgency. An update would be provided on a completion date when confirmed.

20.3 In relation to the Llais behaviours framework feedback from staff and volunteers was being collated following the consultation. These comments would now be included in the framework for a future discussion with the Board.

A report was provided on the programme that had been running with staff on building effective teams and working together as a single organisation. The final session for the national team was completed on the 9 July and feedback is awaited from the facilitators, however all participants stated that they found the session interesting and worthwhile.

20.4 **Llais recruitment** – It was reported that there were several roles that were at varying stages of recruitment and development 2 jobs at appointment stage, 4 positions at pre-employment checks, 2 jobs at live advert stage, 2 awaiting job evaluation and 2 in development stage. It was reported that currently roles needing full evaluation by a job evaluation panel are taking between 4-6 weeks for completion.

Corporate risk report

21.1 The new initial Risk dashboard report was presented by the Interim Board Secretary/Head of Governance. The Board noted the report and agreed that a dashboard style report was a helpful development, recognising that further work was being undertaken through the risk review process, which was due to be reported to the September Board.

Any other business

22.1 No further business was identified for discussion.

Forward look and Board work plan and revised venues for Board meetings

23.1 The forward look and board work plan was discussed and approved. It was noted that the Behavioural Standards would be presented at the September Board meeting.

Questions from the public

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

The meeting closed 14.23pm

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