

**Item: 6**

**Title: Llais office moves**

<b>Gweithredu / Action required</b>	To review and approve office relocations.
<b>Amseru / Timing</b>	Urgent
<b>Argymhelliad / Recommendation</b>	The Board is asked to review the report and approve the recommendation to relocate 4 regional offices and the national office to 4 alternative offices.
<b>Risg / Risk</b>	<p>There is a risk to funding the office moves if they are not expended this financial year.</p> <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 &amp; Vale of Glamorgan offices would represent a missed opportunity to reduce costs, support the wider public sector wherever possible 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 Welsh public sector wherever possible and improve the accessibility of our premises for staff and visitors.</p>
<b>Cyllid / Finance</b>	All associated costs are detailed within the report.

<b>Amcan Cynllun Corfforaethol / Corporate Plan Objective</b>	To grow and improve as an organisation
<b>Ecwiti, Amrywiaeth a Chynhwysiant / Equity, Diversity &amp; Inclusion</b>	Integrated impact assessments have been undertaken on all proposed office moves.
<b>Cyfathrebu / Communications</b>	Please tick one of the following boxes if this activity will have an impact on: <b>Internal:</b> our people <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>External:</b> our customers/partners/stakeholders <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>External:</b> our organisation's reputation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Cymeradwyaeth / Approval/Clearance</b>	Joanne Bolton, Strategic Director of Operations and Corporate Services.
<b>Trafodaethau/ Penderfyniadau Blaenorol / Previous discussions/decisions</b>	The Llais Board has received regular updates on all Llais premises.
<b>Awdur/ Cyflwyno / Author/presenting</b>	Katie Holliday, Director of Finance
<b>Dyddiad / Date</b>	18 December 2024

**Cefndir / Background**

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

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

It also allowed 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 making better

use of the Welsh public sector estate. The location strategy will be submitted for consideration by Board in the final quarter of 2024/2025.

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.

At its July 2024 meeting, the Board received an update on work 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 notification from existing landlords of a need to vacate our current accommodation in some regions.

This paper sets out proposals to end 5 current office leases, and move staff to alternative office space in 4 separate locations.

Each member of staff impacted by a proposed office move has been consulted, each property being proposed has been evaluated using an integrated impact assessment, and has been assessed against business need.

## Manylion / Detail

### Introduction

The following offices require urgent action to vacate:

**Brecon** - Current building will be demolished by the landlord in the new year  
**Neath Port Talbot Swansea** – Cimla office, where the landlord has requested the space be returned to them.

**Carmarthen** - Lease is ending and the current building is not considered fit for purpose.

**Cardiff and Vale regional office and Cardiff, National team**– End of lease period allowing an opportunity to recognise cost savings by having 1 office location instead of 2.

### **Budget**

Due to Llais' ongoing budgetary pressures, a proposal was submitted to the Welsh Government to fund the one off move costs. Annex A shows the Welsh Government submission summary of proposed move costs. The Welsh Government approved the funding of £88,500 on condition that the proposed Llais office moves are agreed into suitable Welsh Government/Welsh public sector buildings within this financial year.

### **Dilapidations**

We are awaiting a response from the Welsh Government on the accounting treatment of dilapidations. We will provide an update on this matter at the Board meeting.

### **Management approach**

A consistent approach to planning and evaluating office moves has been taken, as follows:

- NHS Shared Services has provided a list of potential office spaces.
- The local team, Operations Director, Director of Workforce and Digital Infrastructure Manager have visited potential spaces.
- Integrated Impact Assessments have been undertaken to ensure the proposed space is fit for purpose and significant issues have been identified. An overview of these assessments has been provided in Annex B.
- Draft Heads of Terms have been written by the NHS Shared Services Partnership team.
- Some staff have taken the opportunity to visit the proposed sites.
- Business cases for the proposed office relocations and the Organisational Change policy has been provided to all impacted teams.
- There was an agreed consultation period for staff and volunteers with questions and concerns being responded to.
- In line with the Organisational Change Policy, all staff have been informed they will be able to claim additional mileage and car parking costs for 4 years or 2 years as an advance lump-sum, which is repayable if the employee leaves the organisation.

- If no significant concerns were identified, the consultation period was closed after the four-week period (or earlier if agreed with staff).

### **Annual office running cost comparisons**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Current running costs</b>	<b>Post move running costs</b>	<b>Footprint (sqm) Before/ After</b>	<b>Notice period on current office</b>	<b>Length and type of lease on new office (to be negotiated)</b>
Cardiff & Vale and National Office	£105,000	£76,000	370.58/ 244.39	3 months	5-year lease
Carmarthen	£31,000	£16,000	113.43/ 67.99	3 months	1-year licence
Aberystwyth	£3,600	£0	n/a	3 months	Continue to use on an ad-hoc basis – no lease agreement.
Brecon	£15,000	£15,000	50.95/	One month	Licence – 2 weeks' notice period

The total recurring annual savings arising from the moves is £47,000.

### **Details for each office move**

#### **1 Cardiff & Vale regional office and the national office**

The Cardiff and Vale team are currently based in a business park in Llanishen, and the National team are based in Pontcanna. Due to the close proximity of these two offices, it is proposed to co locate to Cathays Park Welsh Government offices (CP2) in the centre of Cardiff.

The Business Cases for the move highlighted much improved facilities for our colleagues compared to existing offices. Advantages included:

- newly refurbished offices
- accessible
- safe and secure for lone working
- open plan
- private telephone/meeting pods,
- a designated board room
- 3 designated rooms for use as private office or collaboration space.
- Use of other bookable meeting rooms, function room and theatre style function room
- Cafes/canteen/kitchen area and break out area
- Gym
- Secure IT connections
- Excellent public transport links
- Cycle storage

The National team are happy with the proposal. The Cardiff and Vale regional team raised some initial concerns regarding the layout of office space and whether it met the team's needs, but these have since been resolved following discussions with the landlord and staff visiting the office to see the building.

## **2 West Wales – Carmarthen**

The Carmarthen team are based in the Old Station area of Carmarthen. It is proposed to move to a Public Services building in Carmarthen. No other suitable public sector sites have identified within Carmarthen.

The team consider the working environment to be an improvement on the current office accommodation. It is an accessible, safe, and secure site that provides open plan working with private telephone pods, strong Wi-Fi connections, staff rest room and excellent public transport links.

Staff requested that the consultation was closed one week earlier than the deadline as they had no concerns with the potential move.

However, we have since received notification that the number of allocated parking spaces will be limited. We are currently evaluating the parking options with the West Wales team and will provide a verbal update during the board meeting.

## **3 West Wales - Aberystwyth office**

Llais has a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in place to use a small office in the Welsh Government building in Aberystwyth, which is not frequently used.

As part of the Carmarthen office negotiations, the Welsh Government has agreed that Llais can use a meeting room within the Aberystwyth offices on an ad-hoc basis without any associated charges.

#### **4 Powys Office - Brecon**

The Brecon team are currently based in the Powys County Council offices in Neuadd Brycheiniog. Staff visited 2 potential options, office space in the Powys Teaching Health Board offices in Llandrindod Wells and office space in Brecon College.

The team were reluctant to relocate to Llandrindod Wells, due to most colleagues having a much longer commute through rural terrain. The team consider the move to Brecon College as positive due to its location and improved facilities.

The team considers Brecon College offers an improvement to the current office. It is accessible and provides open plan working, flexible working spaces, onsite canteen, gender neutral toilets, excellent public transport links and onsite car parking.

Staff requested that the consultation was closed after one week as they had no concerns with the potential move.

Further and higher education premises are not part of the Welsh Public Sector Estate. Discussions are ongoing with the Welsh Government about the conditions set for receiving the additional funding, and the implications if the move were to Brecon College.

#### **5 Neath Port Talbot and Swansea**

The lease on the Neath, Port Talbot and Swansea office will end on the 31 March 2025 and there is no security of tenure within the lease.

The landlord has requested the site be vacated by 31 March 2025, as they require the office space. NHS Shared Services Partnership has proposed several potential accommodation options, and the team has narrowed these to 2 options, both of which have advantages and disadvantages.

The Welsh Government buildings in Penllergaer Business Park meet many of the criteria identified within the Integrated Impact Assessment. Whilst there is ample car parking on site and there are excellent transport links due to its location alongside the A48 it is not close to public transport links and the nearest bus stop is a 10-

minute walk from the building, with a longer bus journey from Swansea City than preferred.

The alternative site that has been identified is Swansea University, which also meets many of the criteria identified within the Integrated Impact Assessment. Whilst the public transport links for the University are good, parking for staff is an issue as is travelling through Swansea City Centre at peak times. As for the Powys option, University premises are not part of the Welsh Public Sector Estate, which may impact upon funding being provided from the Welsh Government to support the move.

In the short-term, if Llais is forced to vacate on the 31 March 2025, the Welsh Government could be engaged with to agree a short-term licence to occupy, whilst an alternative was found. The team could also continue to work in the short term from home. A verbal update can be provided during the board meeting.

### **Urgency**

It should be noted that decisions will be required quickly due to the Welsh Government funding restrictions noted above. Which means, if a building is yet to be confirmed, a decision between meetings may be urgently requested.

### **Recommendation**

The Board is asked to consider and approve:

- An office move for Cardiff and Vale region and the National team to the Welsh Government offices in Cathays Park
- An office move for the Powys team currently based in Brecon to Brecon college, subject to confirmation on funding arrangements
- An office move for the West Wales team currently based in Carmarthen to the Welsh Government office in Carmarthen, providing the team impacted are content with the parking arrangements (we can update by email subsequently if not resolved by the time of the board meeting).
- An office move for the Neath Port Talbot and Swansea team to be made between meetings due to time constraints.



## Appendix A – Budget agreed by the Welsh Government

### NON RECURRENT ESTIMATED COSTS

	Cardiff & Vale & National Team	Carmarthen	Neath Port Talbot & Swansea	Brecon
Office configuration & fit out costs	24,500.00	5,000.00	5,000.00	5,000.00
Laptop clearing 40 @ £50 each	2,500.00			
Deep cleaning cost	1,000.00	500	500	
Dilapidations - surveyor costs only*	2,000.00	2,000.00	2,000.00	
IT costs**	3,000.00	3,000.00	3,000.00	3,000.00
Office move, packing and removal costs	4,000.00	2,000.00	2,000.00	2,000.00
Decommissioning servers and IT costs of decommissioning kit	2,000.00	2,000.00	2,000.00	2,000.00
Other costs like reprinting, redirecting mail etc	5,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
	<b>44,000.00</b>	<b>15,500.00</b>	<b>15,500.00</b>	<b>13,000.00</b>

\*Surveyor would be used to identify and negotiate actual dilapidation costs. Some estimated provision for dilapidation has been made @ £120 per square foot. No dilapidation costs would be expected for Brecon as the office building will be demolished.

\*\*Costs provided by Welsh Language Commissioner in relation to its single move were £28k. This was to have a truly independent digital infrastructure (separate to Welsh Government)

## Summary of Integrated Impact Assessments

The table below provides an overview of the Integrated Impact Assessment criteria and provides additional narrative where the protected characteristic has been determined to be negatively impacted and provides a brief description of where adjustments can be made.

Protected characteristic	Welsh Government – Cardiff	Welsh Government – Carmarthen	Brecon
Age	Positive	None	None
Disability	Positive	Positive	Positive
Gender Reassignment	Positive	Positive and Negative. There is no gender-neutral toilets. Staff can use the single sex toilet of their choice or alternatively use the accessible toilets located on the ground floor. This	Positive

		could cause isolation.	
Marriage/Civil Partnership	None	None	None
Pregnancy/Maternity	Positive	Positive	Positive and Negative There is space in the staff room/break area for a small fridge which can be used.
Race	Negative WG Buildings have a substantial security presence, which may negatively impact minority ethnic individuals when accessing our services as, due to their lived experiences, they may have distrust of government. In this instance, alternative meeting locations can be provided.	Negative WG Buildings have a substantial security presence, which may negatively impact minority ethnic individuals when accessing our services as, due to their lived experiences, they may have distrust of government. In this instance, alternative	None

		meeting locations can be provided.	
Religion or belief	Positive	Positive	Positive and Negative There is space in the staff room/break area for a small fridge which can be used.
Sex	Positive	Positive	Positive
Sexual Orientation	None	None	None
<b>Wales-specific considerations</b>			
Health	Positive	None	Positive
Socio-Economic	Positive and Negative The parking charges at the proposed site may have a negative impact, particularly on staff in lower pay bands, who are more likely to carry out the day-to-day functions in our offices e.g., administrative. Statistically those staff are more likely to be	Positive	Negative. Whilst there may be a very slight negative impact due to additional mileage, this is not expected to impact staff/volunteers and clients as the office is 1.2 miles from the current office. Transport links and services are more accessible at the proposed site.

	people from ethnic minority backgrounds. In addition, service users may also be impacted by parking charges.		
Well-being of Future Generations	Positive	Positive	Positive
Welsh Language	Positive	None	None
<b>Additional considerations</b>			
Carers/Care-Experienced or those with caring responsibilities	Positive	Positive	None
Digital Inclusion/Exclusion	None	None	None
Rurality	None	None	Positive
Data Protection	Data Protection Impact Assessment to be completed	No Data Protection Impact Assessment required	No Data Protection Impact Assessment required

Any proposed changes to the office environment will be reassessed against the criteria identified within Llais' Integrated Impact Assessment.