

Llais Cymru - Board Meeting

Wednesday 18 December 2024

**Venue: Holiday Inn Cardiff City Centre, Castle Street,
Cardiff, CF10 1XD**

Zoom Meeting

Members:

Medwin Hughes
Alyson Thomas
Bamidele Adenipekun
Barbara Harrington
Jack Evershed
Grace Quantock
Karen Lewis
Rajan Madhok
Jason Smith

Chair
Chief Executive
Non-Executive
Non-Executive
Non-Executive
Deputy Chair
Non-Executive
Non-Executive
Non-Executive

Attendees:

Angela Mutlow
Ben Eaton
Joanne Bolton
Katie Holliday
Kirsty Contreras-Stacey
Helen Goddard

Director of Operations
Strategic Director of Organisational
Strategy and Engagement
Strategic Director of Operations and
Corporate Services
Finance Director
Governance Officer
Audit Wales

Welcome, introductions, declarations of interest and apologies

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and extended a warm welcome to Helen Goddard (Audit Wales) and Katie Holliday (Llais Director of Finance). The chair also welcomed all those who were joining the meeting online.
- 1.2 Apologies were received from Richard Bevan (Interim Board Secretary). The Chair extended his get well wishes.
- 1.3 3 changes to the declarations of interest register were notified. One from Alyson Thomas with no relevance to the agenda items, one from Rajan Madhok and Barbara Harrington. Full details were provided via email after the meeting and registered.

Audit and Accounts letter of representation

- 2.0 Helen Goddard representing Audit Wales confirmed the completion of the audit of Llais's Annual Report and Accounts for 2023/2024, noting that the recommendation had been made to the Auditor General for Wales to give an unqualified opinion for the accounts.
- 2.1 Helen Goddard thanked everyone involved in the audit, noting their positive engagement with the process and the quality of the documentation provided. The positive outcome for 2023/24 audit and the quality of the documentation was something for which the organisation could be proud.
- 2.2 Karen Lewis, Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee thanked members of the committee for scrutinising the report on the 27 November 2024 and confirmed that the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee was happy to recommend the Annual Report and Accounts to the Board for approval.
- 2.3 The Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee noted that the learning from this year's audit activity would enable the process to be smoother for 2024/225 next year as the understanding of requirements has increased.

- 2.4 The Chief Executive noted it was her first year as accounting officer and conveyed her thanks to all members of staff and external partners involved in producing the Annual Report and Accounts.
- 2.5 The Board approved the Annual Report and Accounts for 2023/2024 and associated actions to formally sign all relevant documentation for submission to the Auditor General for Wales. The Annual Report and Accounts would be formally laid at the Senedd, submitted to the Welsh Government and published on the Llais website.

Llais office moves and arrangements

- 3.0 The Director of Finance reported good progress was being made in taking forward plans to relocate some of the Llais office premises. 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 staff and the public, when accessing services.
- 3.1 Current moves were being taken forward in line with the Llais Organisational Change Policy. This would ensure that staff who incurred any additional costs as a result of any agreed move would be re-imbursed in line with the policy.
- 3.2 The Board was reminded of the background to the proposals to relocate a number of current Llais offices. In summary:
- **West Wales, Carmarthen Office** – There was a current high risk of flooding and Llais is unable to obtain insurance to offset these risks. The proposed new office space is in the Welsh Government's Public Services building in Carmarthen. Since the Board was last updated on progress with the move, an additional hurdle had been identified relating to parking arrangements. This was subject to on-going discussions, including with staff.
 - **Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan region** – The office is not fully accessible for staff, and there are opportunities to reduce rent and service charges by moving to alternative premises. The proposed new office space is in the Public Services building – 4th floor, Cathays Park, Cardiff. The benefits and risks

associated with the proposed move were set out in a detailed integrated impact assessment.

- **National team** – The current office in Cathedral Road had several issues and is not considered suitable to meet the different needs of an expanded team. As for the Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan region, the proposed new office space is in the Public Services building in Cathays Park, Cardiff, and a detailed integrated impact assessment sets out the benefits and risks associated with the potential move.
- **Powys** – The Llais team currently based in Brecon need to move as the current premises are being closed by the local authority which owns the building. The availability of suitable alternative premises is very limited.

The preferred option is located in a building owned by a further education institution. This does not currently fall within the category of a 'public sector' building as set out in the conditions for funding made by the Welsh Government as part of its offer to support our one-off move costs. Discussions are ongoing with the Welsh Government to extend the scope of the conditions set for funding to facilitate this move.

- **Neath Port Talbot/Swansea** – Work is continuing to identify suitable premises to relocate staff working in the Neath Port Talbot and Swansea region. None of the identified options so far were considered ideal in terms of staff and public accessibility.

The Board supported the team in continuing its work to identify more suitable options, including potential new developments designed to support hub working for the public sector.

- 3.3 The Board approved the proposed moves for the National Office, Cardiff and the Vale, Carmarthen and Powys regions, subject to satisfactory conclusion of the outstanding issues. The Board noted that decisions relating to the Neath Port Talbot/Swansea relocation may need to be made outside the Board meeting cycle, and ratified at the next available meeting.

Questions from the public

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

Final thoughts for 2024

6.0 The Chair concluded the meeting by thanking Barbara Harrington, non-executive member of the Board on her final meeting with the Board. The Chair and board members thanked Barbara for her considerable contribution as a founding member of the Llais Board, and wished her well for the future.

The meeting concluded with the Chair wishing all - Nadolig llawen, and a Merry Christmas to all.

The meeting closed 10.00am