

Approved minutes of the Workforce, Remuneration and Terms of Service Committee

Wednesday 29 October 2025
Teams meeting

Members:

Grace Quantock	Chair of the Committee (Deputy Chair of the Board)
Bamidele Adenipekun	Non-Executive member
Rajan Madhok	Non-Executive member

Attendees:

Alyson Thomas	Chief Executive
Richard Bevan	Corporate Director of Governance and Board Secretary
Christopher Davies	Director of People, Well-being and Organisational Development

Apologies:

Medwin Hughes	Committee member (Chair of the Board)
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Minutes:

Karla Williams	Governance and Risk Manager
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1.0 Welcome, introductions, declarations of interest and apologies

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone and thanked colleagues for the work that had been undertaken in preparing the papers for the meeting.
- 1.2 It was agreed to record the meeting for the purpose of the minutes only.
- 1.3 Apologies were received and noted as above. There were no declarations of interest noted.

2.0 People update report

2.1 The Director of People, Wellbeing and Organisational Development presented the workforce update report, and offered a comprehensive overview of recent developments within the workforce function including the following recruitment updates:

- The People and OD Manager had started in post.
- The People Services Assistant role was successfully filled following interviews held on 23 October 2025, with a planned start date in early December.
- No appointment was made for the Complaints Advocate role in the Gwent region; the vacancy had been re-advertised and was currently in the shortlisting phase.
- An ICT Systems Administrator had been appointed.
- Applications for the Regional Head of Complaints Advocacy and Engagement roles closed on 22 October 2025, with interviews scheduled to begin from 03 November 2025.
- Job evaluations for the Regional Engagement Officer roles have been received, and advertisements are being prepared.
- Regional Engagement Support roles are currently under development and will be sent out for consultation in due course.

2.2 In addition to the current recruitment activity, a request had been made to review the variance in the agreed establishment. A summary was provided outlining where vacancies remained and how these were being covered pending recruitment.

2.3 The Chief Executive provided context on the use of agency staff to cover certain vacancies. The decision to use agency support varied by region, depending on the flexibility available to meet work plan commitments. In some cases, responsibilities had been

redistributed internally, allowing delivery without agency support. However, other regions required external support due to limited flexibility. It was noted that regional teams differed in size and structure, which influenced these decisions.

- 2.4 The Chief Executive referenced discussions from the in-committee Board meeting in September 2025, following the departure of the Strategic Director of Corporate Services and Operations in early October 2025. A review of the Strategic Director of Organisational Strategy and Engagement role was undertaken with the expectation that a full job evaluation might not be required.
- 2.5 However, Shared Services had advised that a full evaluation was necessary, which extended the timeline for the change to be considered. As a result, the Executive Team agreed to proceed with advertising the new role of Corporate Director of People and Resources to replace the previous Strategic Director of Corporate Services and Operations post, accepting the risk associated with the pending outcome of the evaluation of the other post.
- 2.6 A reallocation of duties from the former Strategic Director of Corporate Services and Operations role to members of the Executive and agency support was being used to mitigate any gaps.
- 2.7 A request was made for a view of the current organisational structure diagram. It was agreed that this would be circulated.
Action: Corporate Director of Governance/Board Secretary
- 2.8 Challenges in recruiting within the NHS and wider public sector were acknowledged. A Non-Executive member queried whether those challenges would impact on the overall work programme and introduce new risks. The Chief Executive confirmed that many of the vacancies stemmed from the early release scheme and were anticipated during planning. As such, the work programme was designed to reflect the resourcing constraints.
- 2.9 In terms of the response to the departure to the Strategic Director of Corporate Services and Operations a range remedial action was

taking place in a number of areas and updates would be made to the corporate risk register to reflect the additional work being undertaken.

- 2.10 A six-month review of progress against the work plan had been conducted, and adjustments would continue to be made as needed. The organisation had benefited from the flexibility provided by fixed-term agency appointments, which had enabled the delivery of specialist skills. No significant risks had been identified in relation to achieving work plan commitments, though this would remain under monthly review.
- 2.11 Concerns were raised regarding the short-term nature of agency roles. The Chief Executive reassured the committee that agency staff with specialist skills were working closely with teams to enable effective skills transfer, ensuring long-term benefits despite the higher short-term costs.
- 2.12 A Non-Executive member queried the risk of withdrawing and having to re-advertise a role. The Chief Executive acknowledged a reputational risk and noted that while pausing a recruitment process is not ideal, the Executive Team had determined that delaying the recruitment of the new Corporate Director of People and Resources would pose a greater longer-term risk.
- 2.13 An example was shared regarding investment in IT infrastructure, where short-term recruitment was used to bring in strategic insight and expertise. Concerns were raised about the Digital Infrastructure, and it was suggested that more strategic capabilities should have been developed internally.
- 2.14 It was noted that much activity had been focused on operational tasks and infrastructure considerations. With additional support now in place, there would be increased capacity to focus on strategic matters for digital and IT.

A25-10-01: Organisation structure diagram – It was agreed to circulate the structure diagram via email to the committee. **Action:**

Corporate Director of Governance and Board Secretary /
Governance and Risk Manager.

3.0 People strategy - draft

- 3.1 The Director of People, Wellbeing and Organisational Development presented the draft people strategy and invited the committee to provide feedback.
- 3.2 A Non-Executive member commended the clarity and presentation of the strategy, but raised questions regarding the implementation timelines and measurable outcomes. The Director of People, Wellbeing and Organisational Development responded that while the plans were ambitious, the team was confident that the necessary elements were in place and committed to meeting the organisation's needs.
- 3.3 The Chief Executive commented that the strategy had been reviewed by the Executive Team, who endorsed its ambitious direction. However, concerns were recognised regarding the feasibility of the proposed delivery timescales. Following input from the Committee, the strategy would be shared with staff for further engagement before being revised and submitted to the Executive Team for consideration.
- 3.4 The Chair acknowledged that the implementation of the strategy warranted dedicated attention and suggested that it be scheduled as a stand-alone item at a future meeting. It was agreed to include this in the forward work plan to bring back a report. **Action: Corporate Director of Governance/ Board Secretary.**
- 3.5 The Chief Executive emphasised that feedback from both the Committee and staff was vital to shaping a strategy that would be robust, inclusive, and aligned with the organisation's values and aspirations.
- 3.6 It was noted that the regional ambassador roles would play a key part in strengthening the connection between teams and the Board, offering greater opportunities for Board members to engage

with regional teams and gain insight into the challenges they faced on a daily basis.

- 3.7 The Corporate Director of Governance and Board Secretary informed the Committee that it had been agreed that the full complement of Non-Executive roles needed to be in place for the Chair of Llais to consider with the Board on how best to progress with these roles and any reallocations.
- 3.8 An update would be provided by the Chair of Llais to support the development of a work plan for the new year, aligned with the 2026–2027 annual plan. The Chief Executive added that the regional ambassador roles were already in place in many regions and as outlined these would be reviewed.
- 3.9 A Non-Executive member raised concerns regarding the number of non-executive member tenures due to end in July 2026 and queried the potential impact. The Corporate Director of Governance/Board Secretary sought to reassure the Committee that discussions were ongoing between the Chair and Welsh Government regarding the future arrangements for Board members whose tenures were nearing an end.
- 3.10 The Chair of Llais would make formal proposals to the Cabinet Secretary for each individual, with proposals to be submitted to the Public Appointments Unit for consideration by the Cabinet Secretary. It was hoped that this could be concluded prior to the election in May 2026.
- 3.11 The committee Chair concluded that the current political environment presented uncertainty and challenges. However, Wales was in a unique position, benefiting from legislative support not available to Healthwatch in England.
- 3.12 The Chief Executive explained that staff had been tasked with maintaining regular engagement with political stakeholders. The Executive Team was in the process of framing manifesto calls, which would be considered by the Board in coming weeks.

A25-10-02: People strategy Implementation Update – Bring back an update following implementation of the people strategy. Add to the forward work plan. **Action:** Director of People, Well-being and Organisational Development and Corporate Director of Governance/Board Secretary

A25-10-03: Regional ambassador roles – Provide an update to enable progression of a plan to review work for the new year alongside the new annual plan for 2026-2027. **Action:** Corporate Director of Governance/Board Secretary.

4.0 Exit interview update – quarter ending September 2025

- 4.1 The Director of People, Wellbeing and Organisational Development presented an update on the exit interviews for the quarter ending September 2025.
- 4.2 It was noted there were not many leavers reported in this period, therefore, there wasn't a lot of information to provide as none of the leavers had decided to return exit questionnaires.
- 4.3 From 1 October 2025, a member of the People Team would look to contact the employee directly during their notice period and arrange a confidential short meeting in person or via teams with the employee to collect their responses.
- 4.4 It was hoped that this more proactive process would increase the number of staff who contributed to the exit process and the quality of the information gathered. This would allow Llais to better analyse the reasons for staff leaving and where necessary to make any improvements. A planned update would be provided in the next quarter.
- 4.5 A Non-Executive Member highlighted that when employees decide to leave an organisation, it's often not a sudden decision. There are usually early signs, such as feedback during one-to-one meetings or appraisals that leaders could pick up on. It was suggested that rather than waiting until someone resigns, leaders should proactively engage with employees who had previously expressed a desire to leave.

- 4.6 Regular check-ins with these individuals could help assess the issues. It was explained that these arrangements were in place and further engagement with and training for those with line management roles was being framed.

A25-10-04: Exit Interview Update – Provide an update for the next quarter on themes provided within the exit interview and evaluate how the different process that had been undertaken had helped with retention where appropriate. **Action:** Director of People, Wellbeing and Organisational Development.

5.0 Policy update report and policy implementation timeline

- 5.1 The Director of People, Wellbeing and Organisational Development provided an overview of the current position regarding inherited people policies from the former employer following the establishment of Llais. He explained that the purpose of the paper was to outline how these policies were being managed going forward
- 5.2 He confirmed that, in collaboration with the Corporate Director of Governance/Board Secretary, a clear and structured policy review cycle had been established. While the cycle was complex, due to the number of stakeholders and consultation points, it provided a roadmap for future policy development and review.
- 5.3 It was noted that the plan was subject to change if legislation shifted or if a policy was found to be no longer fit for purpose, which might require reprioritisation. The policies selected for initial review were those most frequently used by staff and managers, and the rationale for their prioritisation was reflected in the paper.
- 5.4 In summary, the document served as a working plan to guide the organisation from its current position to its intended future state regarding people policies.
- 5.5 The Committee welcomed the paper and noted the planned programme of work.

6.0 Policies that require approval

- 6.1 The Chief Executive provided an update on 2 new policies that were introduced following recent legislative changes; Neonatal Care Leave and Pay Policy and Sexual Harassment Policy. While some of the protections within these policies were previously embedded in other documents, consolidating them into dedicated policies ensured greater focus and clarity.
- 6.2 In particular, the Neonatal Care Leave and Pay Policy presented an opportunity for the organisation to go beyond statutory requirements. Staff feedback during consultation indicated a preference for a more generous offer. In response, the Executive Team explored options to enhance the statutory provision, including:
- Offering full or partial pay for a defined period.
 - Applying a qualifying period.
 - Considering a repayment clause if the employee leaves within a specified timeframe.
- 6.3 The Chief Executive noted that the cost implications of the most generous option, full pay with a 26-week qualifying period and no repayment clause, would be minimal due to the low number of staff likely to be affected. This approach aligned with practices in other public sector bodies and would reinforce the organisation's commitment to being values-driven and people-focused.
- 6.4 The Sexual Harassment Policy was described as more straightforward, with the organisation implementing the legislative requirements in a way that reflected its values, tone and culture.
- 6.5 The discussion was opened by reflecting on broader debates around staff value and financial recognition. A Non-Executive member questioned whether financial support was the only way to demonstrate organisational values, suggesting that other forms of appreciation should also be considered.

- 6.6 Another Non-Executive member responded by sharing their experience as a single parent with a child in neonatal care and emphasised that while emotional support was important, financial stability during such a critical time was essential. The anxiety of potentially losing a child would be compounded by financial stress and urged the organisation to adopt the enhanced pay option, noting that even modest financial support can make a significant difference for families in crisis.
- 6.7 The Chair acknowledged both viewpoints, clarifying that offering enhanced financial support does not preclude other forms of staff support. It was affirmed that the organisation could and should consider multiple ways to support staff and welcomed further suggestions. The Chair also shared her own experience of being born prematurely and living with lifelong disabilities, reinforcing the importance of compassionate and comprehensive support.
- 6.8 The Committee reflected that the discussion highlighted a strong case for adopting the enhanced pay option within the Neonatal Care Leave and Pay Policy, complementing financial support with a values-driven approach to staff wellbeing.
- 6.9 The Chief Executive reiterated that while broader conversations around staff support and reward were ongoing, the introduction of the Neonatal Care Leave and Pay Policy presented a timely opportunity. As the policy was required by statute, the organisation had the chance to go beyond the minimum legal requirement and remove financial stress for staff during an already difficult time.
- 6.10 It was emphasised that this was not about pay bargaining, but about removing barriers for staff facing significant emotional and practical challenges. The enhanced option was recommended - full pay with a minimum qualifying period and no repayment clause and highlighted that the cost to the organisation was low, while the benefits to staff wellbeing and organisational values would be significant.

- 6.11 Members of the committee supported this view, and a broader question was raised about consistency across other policies, asking whether similar enhancements could be considered beyond statutory provisions. It was emphasised the importance of creating a culture where staff felt confident that they would be supported without the need to ask and urged the organisation to accelerate progress on the wider people strategy to embed this approach.
- 6.12 The Chief Executive reflected on the challenge of reviewing individual policies without considering the broader organisational framework. It was proposed to illustrate how the Neonatal Care Leave and Pay Policy would interact with other existing policies, such as counselling services and financial guidance, to demonstrate the wraparound support available to staff.
- 6.13 The Chief Executive emphasised that adopting enhanced policies would not create inequity but rather signal the organisation's commitment to going beyond statutory requirements. It was confirmed that all policies would be reviewed in turn, with a prioritised approach to avoid overwhelming staff and the People Team, in line with the previous paper.
- 6.14 The Chair agreed and noted that the enhanced policy was part of a wider cycle of policy review. The importance was stressed of ensuring equity across other leave policies and the committee welcomed the opportunity to explore this further.
- 6.15 Members reiterated their support, emphasising that a good organisation removed unnecessary stress and ensured staff felt confident they would be supported without needing to ask. A Non-Executive member urged the organisation to continue progressing the broader People Strategy to embed this culture.
- 6.16 The Chair concluded that the discussion had been robust and meaningful, and thanked a Non-Executive member for her powerful personal contribution, which strongly informed the direction of the conversation.

- 6.17 The Corporate Director of Governance and Board Secretary requested formal confirmation of the Committee's support for both policies, including the decision to adopt the enhanced neonatal pay package.
- 6.18 The Chair confirmed unanimous support from the Committee, enabling the recommendation to be taken forward to the Board for approval.

7.0 Learning and development update

- 7.1 The Chief Executive provided an overview of the organisation's evolving learning and development programme, highlighting a shift toward a more structured and strategic approach. Key areas of focus included:
- Leadership development: Enhanced mentoring and coaching support were being offered, particularly for staff stepping into leadership and management roles, addressing a previously unmet need.
 - Learning through practice: Work was underway to strengthen consistency in service change processes and improve the impact of representations. Workshops had been delivered to support this learning.
 - Cyber awareness: Staff participated in simulated phishing attacks, with follow-up learning provided. This programme would continue.
 - External collaboration: Joint learning sessions were planned with Care Inspectorate Wales, focusing on how complaint intelligence could inform inspection processes.
 - Complaints advocacy development: A skills and knowledge review would be undertaken for complaints advocacy staff, in preparation for the new Listening to People complaints system launching in April 2026. This included reviewing qualification arrangements and support structures.

- Responsive training: De-escalation training had been introduced following increased reports of staff encountering distressed individuals, particularly via first point of contact and complaints services. Staff feedback had been positive.
- Lone working awareness: Training was being expanded to cover both community-based and office-based lone working scenarios, ensuring policy reviews translated into practical support.
- British Sign Language: 8 staff members would be supported to undertake self-directed BSL learning, with applications being sought with general awareness sessions for all staff being planned. It was agreed that an update on progress will be provided at the next meeting.
- Middle management development: Training was being developed to support managers in proactively handling sickness absence and performance management, aiming to intervene early and prevent escalation.
- Strategic planning: A new Knowledge and Skills Framework would be developed to support a comprehensive learning needs analysis, ensuring future programmes aligned with strategic goals. The approach would move from opportunistic to systematic approaches, supported by a now fully resourced team and potential external input.

7.2 The Chair acknowledged the breadth of the learning and development work and added a note regarding inclusive language, specifically around the phrasing used in reference to deafness. The Chair also expressed interest in joining any internal practice groups within Llais, noting the difficulty in finding accessible non-American Sign Language groups online, as the Chair was also currently learning BSL.

A25-10-05: British Sign Language – An update to be provided on progress with implementation of BSL learning in Llais. **Action:** Director of People and Organisational Development.

8.0 Annual effectiveness review

- 8.1 The Corporate Director of Governance and Board Secretary introduced a proposal for the committee to undertake a self-assessment of its effectiveness, in line with good governance practice. The review aimed to:
- Reflect on how the committee conducted its business.
 - Identified areas for development; and
 - Informed the future work programme.
- 8.2 A set of standard questions would be circulated to committee members and regular attendees between meetings. The responses would be collated, and a summary would be presented either at the February 2026 meeting or in a bespoke feedback session, depending on committee preference.
- 8.3 A Non-Executive member supported the review but raised a point about timing and alignment with broader board effectiveness efforts. He suggested considering the committee's recent expansion and ensuring the review fitted within an overarching timetable for board and committee development.
- 8.4 It was acknowledged and confirmed that while the committee was relatively new, completing this review would provide a useful baseline. It would also complement the wider board effectiveness review process and support the development of a more integrated approach going forward.
- 8.5 The Chair agreed, and noted that while broader alignment was important, the committee had the opportunity to take proactive steps to improve its effectiveness. The committee confirmed its support for the proposed approach.

- 8.6 The committee formally agreed to proceed with the review. It was agreed for the Corporate Director of Governance/Board Secretary would circulate the questions and coordinate the next steps.

A25-10-06: Committee Effectiveness Review – Circulate the questions and coordinate the next steps. **Action:** Corporate Director of Governance/Board Secretary.

9.0 **Equity, diversity and inclusion statistical review of recruitment**

- 9.1 The Chair introduced the agenda item and acknowledged the importance of the statistical review and invited key points from the paper. The Chief Executive explained that while it had taken time to obtain the recruitment data from shared services, the organisation had a foundation approach in place to collect and analyse EDI data more regularly, which included data from both recruitment processes and existing staff.
- 9.2 Initial findings showed disparities in shortlisting success rates, particularly for applicants identifying as black, Asian, minority ethnic and disabled, compared to those from white backgrounds. Further analysis was underway to understand patterns and inform changes to recruitment practices.
- 9.3 Llais used an NHS-designed recruitment system, which, while functional, did not fully align with the organisation's unique needs. A review was initiated to explore a more specific recruitment approach, aiming to improve accessibility and reduce systemic barriers.
- 9.4 A committee member asked whether a participant in the Aspiring Board Member Programme, could contribute to this work. It was confirmed that a previous meeting was attended and the participant had received feedback from the Chair of Llais. The Chief Executive was also to meet and would share reflections of that meeting. It was recognised that whilst her formal involvement was limited to Board meetings, her insights might still inform the

equity, diversity and inclusion work. The Chief Executive agreed to provide an update at the next meeting.

- 9.5 The Chair looked forward to the committee helping to shape the next phase of action, with a more detailed report expected at the next meeting.

A25-10-07: Data from recruitment processes – Regarding applicants identifying as black, Asian, minority ethnic and disabled, compared to those from white backgrounds to be provided at a future meeting. **Action:** The Director of People, Well-being and Organisational Development.

A25-10-08: Equity, diversity and inclusion work – To provide insights from the Aspiring Board Member to inform the equity, diversity and inclusion work and present to an upcoming Committee meeting. **Action:** The Chief Executive.

A25-10-09: Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion statistical review of recruitment updated paper – Provide an update in a more detailed report for the next meeting. **Action:** The Director of People, Well-being and Organisational Development.

10.0 People and workforce risks

- 10.1 The Corporate Director of Governance/Board Secretary introduced the people and workforce risks paper and noted it was presented for assurance purposes. He explained that, in line with the organisation's Risk Management Strategy, each committee was expected to monitor risks relevant to its remit. For this committee workforce and people-related risks had been included.
- 10.2 The paper provided a narrative-style overview, consistent with the format favoured by the Board and Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. It highlighted risks associated with people and workforce matters, many of which were referenced in earlier discussions.

- 10.3 It was emphasised that this was a starting point for the committee's ongoing role in monitoring and scrutinising workforce risks, and that future risks may be added as the committee's work evolved.
- 10.4 The committee's approach to risk would be further refined through the upcoming effectiveness review and feedback was welcomed on how risks should be handled going forward. The Chair supported the approach, acknowledging the importance of embedding risk into the committee's agenda and welcomed the opportunity to fine-tune the process. The committee noted the paper.

11.0 To discuss and confirm the minutes from the last meeting

- 11.1 The draft minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2025 were reviewed.
- 11.2 The minutes were approved as a true and accurate record.

12.0 Action log update

- 12.1 The Corporate Director of Governance/Board Secretary presented the updated action log and reported positive progress with the majority of actions completed following review by the Executive Team. The one remaining item related to the Gender Pay Gap Report, which had been drafted but required further updates before submission.
- 12.2 Given the next formal committee meeting was not until February 2026, it was proposed circulating the finalised report between meetings, allowing timely submission ahead of the March 2026 deadline. This approach was supported and agreed as an action.
- 12.3 The Chief Executive added that the delay in progressing the report was due to resourcing pressures during a team transition. The Chief Executive requested follow-up conversations to clarify earlier feedback and ensure the report was updated appropriately to meet committee expectations.

A25-10-10: Action log / Gender Pay Gap Report – Circulate the finalised report between meetings, allowing timely submission ahead of the March 2026 deadline. **Action:** Corporate Director of Governance/Board Secretary/Chief Executive

13.0 Committee forward plan and schedule of business 2025/2026

- 13.1 The draft forward plan was presented and noted. It was recognised that this would evolve based on outputs from the upcoming effectiveness review. The plan outlined meeting dates and key areas of business already identified.
- 13.2 Further refinement would be made in collaboration with colleagues to ensure all relevant items were scheduled appropriately. It was emphasised that the plan was intended as a flexible framework, which would be actively updated to reflect emerging priorities and committee feedback.
- 13.3 No immediate concerns were raised, and the committee acknowledged the plan as a useful starting point.

14.0 Any other business

- 14.1 **Draft Safeguarding Policy:** The Corporate Director of Governance/Board Secretary raised the ongoing work on the Safeguarding Policy and noted its development and importance.
- 14.2 The Chief Executive explained that a range of development work had been undertaken on the policy and staff, and trade union consultation had been taking place. Once this was concluded it was agreed that the proposed policy would come to the committee for consideration and comment between meetings to enable the policy to be finalised and presented to the Board.
- 14.3 It was planned that this would happen at the November 2025 Board meeting. The Corporate Director of Governance/ Board Secretary agreed to arrange to circulate the policy for comment when confirmation was received that the above consultation work had concluded and that the outputs were considered by the

Executive Team. **Action: Corporate Director of Governance/Board Secretary**

- 14.4 **Non-executive member and chair mentoring and development:** A conversation followed around board and committee chair mentoring and development opportunities. The committee chair shared her experience with recent public appointment interviews and the lack of structured support for aspiring chairs and non-executive members.
- 14.5 The Chief Executive offered to speak with Welsh Government to explore whether a mentoring scheme could be established, pairing experienced or outgoing board chairs and non-executives with those seeking such roles and feedback to the next meeting.
- 14.6 The Corporate Director of Governance/Board Secretary reminded the committee about the current Aspiring Board Members programme. The committee welcomed the idea from the Chief Executive and expressed appreciation for the support.
- A25-10-11: Member development programmes and mentoring opportunities** - The Chief Executive to provide an update following discussion with Welsh Government. **Action:** The Chief Executive.
- 14.7 There was no other business to discuss.

15.0 To confirm the date of the next meeting

- 15.1 The next meeting is scheduled for the 12 March 2026.
- 15.2 The meeting closed at 12:00 noon.