

# Pre-appointment Hearing - Chair of Swansea Bay University Health Board

March 2020

## 1. Introduction

1. On 12 March 2020, the Committee held a pre-appointment hearing with Emma Woollett, the Welsh Government's preferred candidate for the position of Chair of Swansea Bay University Health Board (UHB). The meeting transcript is available on the Committee's website.
2. To inform the hearing, the Committee asked the preferred candidate to respond to a questionnaire, which is included at Annexe A.

### 1.1 Background

3. Swansea Bay University Health Board (formerly Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board (ABMU)) was created on 1 April 2019, after responsibility for providing healthcare services in the Bridgend County Borough Council area passed from ABMU to the new Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board.
4. Swansea Bay UHB covers a population of around 390,000 in the Neath Port Talbot and Swansea areas and has a budget of around £1bn. The health board employs approximately 12,500 staff.<sup>1</sup>
5. It has three major hospitals providing a range of services: Morriston and Singleton in Swansea, and Neath Port Talbot Hospital in Baglan, Port Talbot. It also has a community hospital and primary care resource centres providing clinical

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<sup>1</sup> Details taken from the '[Information for Candidates](#)' document, which accompanied the advertisement for the role



services outside the main hospitals. There are 49 GP practices in the health board area, 72 dental practices including orthodontists, 31 optometry practices and 92 community pharmacies.<sup>2</sup>

**6.** The Welsh Centre for Burns and Plastic Surgery at Morriston Hospital covers not only south and mid Wales, but the south west of England. Morriston also delivers one of two cardiac surgery services in Wales. Other specialist services provided by the health board include cleft lip and palate, renal, fertility and bariatric (obesity).<sup>3</sup>

**7.** Forensic mental health services are provided to a wider community which extends across the whole of South Wales. The health board is part of A Regional Collaboration for Health (ARCH), which is a partnership with Hywel Dda University Health Board and Swansea University.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. The recruitment process

**8.** On 29 March 2019, Welsh Government officials were informed by the Board Secretary of Swansea Bay University Health Board that Andrew Davies would stand down as Chair as soon as an individual had been appointed to succeed him. The Minister for Health and Social Services agreed to advertise for a new Chair on this basis.

**9.** The Welsh Government circulated details of the appointment through stakeholder lists held by the Public Bodies Unit (PBU) and posted the vacancy on the Welsh Government public appointments website and the UK Cabinet Office website. The vacancy was also posted to the Swansea Bay University Health Board website.

**10.** The vacancy was promoted by the following Social Media channels and advertised through the media listed below:

- Twitter – Minister for Health and Social Services
- Twitter – Follower’s of the Swansea Bay University Health Board twitter account

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<sup>2</sup> Details taken from the ‘[Information for Candidates](#)’ document, which accompanied the advertisement for the role

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

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- Twitter - Follower's of the NHS Confederation twitter account
- Fish4Jobs – online only
- Golwg 360 – online only
- Diversity Jobs Network - online only

## 2.1 Role and person specification

**11.** The Welsh Government set out the role of the Chair in the information pack for applicants. The key responsibilities were listed as:

- Develop a Strategic Vision for the Board's services of the future, identifying and realising the inherent potential and skills within the organisation to develop an innovative and world leading service;
- Provide strong, effective and visible leadership across the breadth of the Board's responsibilities, internally through the Board and externally through his/her connections with a wide range of stakeholders and partners at community, local authority, Health Board and national levels;
- Ensure the Board delivers effectively together the strategic and operational aims of the Health Board through delivery of strategic aims, policy and governance;
- Be responsible for maintaining the highest quality of public health standards and practices, and improving quality and safety of healthcare;
- Be accountable for the performance of the Board at community, local authority, Board and national levels through the agreement of a three year integrated medium term plan (IMTP) and an annual delivery plan and the annual evaluation of achievements against the plan in public by the Minister for Health and Social Services;
- Hold the Chief Executive to account across the breadth of his/her responsibilities;
- Work effectively with partners, in particular with other Health Boards, Local Authorities, the Third Sector and Social Partners, and also with primary care contractors, to ensure the planning and delivery of safe, effective services;

- Provide the assurance and governance for the proper stewardship of public money and other resources for which the Board is accountable;
- Provide the assurance for ensuring that the Board is governed effectively within the framework and standards set for the NHS in Wales;
- Undertake an external ambassador role, delivering in the public spotlight and instilling public confidence.

**12.** The Chair will be accountable to the Minister for Health and Social Services for the performance of the Board and its effective governance.

## 2.2 Assessment Advisory Panel membership

**13.** The Panel members were:

- Dr Andrew Goodall CBE, Director General for Health and Social Services/ NHS Wales Chief Executive (Panel Chair);
- Helen Arthur, Director of Workforce and Corporate Business, Health and Social Services Directorate, Welsh Government – Welsh Government Representative;
- Dr Ruth Hussey CB OBE, Former Chief Medical Officer for NHS Wales, Health and Social Services Directorate, Welsh Government – Senior Independent Panel Member;
- David Jenkins OBE, Former Chair, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board – Independent Panel Member.

**14.** The advertisement for the role was originally published on the Welsh Government's Public Appointments Website on 15 April 2019. The closing date for applications was 10 May 2019. Following the sift on 20 May 2019, one candidate (Emma Woollett) was deemed competent to be invited to interview. As only one candidate would be going forward to interview, the Minister for Health and Social Services would not be provided with a pool of appointable candidates for him to consider (Paragraph 3.1, Bullet Point 7 of the *Governance Code on Public Appointments*<sup>5</sup> refers). With this in mind, the Minister agreed to the panel's recommendation to re-advertise the role.

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<sup>5</sup> Cabinet Office, *Governance Code on Public Appointments*: December 2016

**15.** The role was re-advertised on 12 November 2019. The closing date for applications was 13 December 2019. To allow for the role to be re-advertised, the Commissioner for Public Appointments agreed to appoint Emma Woollett as Interim Chair until 31 January 2020.

**16.** A total of five applications for the re-advertised role were received. The sift meeting took place on 6 January 2020 and two candidates were recommended for interview. The Assessment Advisory Panel considered there to be one appointable candidate.

### Our view

**17.** It is disappointing that the advertisement process for a prominent public position, such as the Chair of a Health Board, should have to be re-run because of a lack of suitable candidates for interview. As such, there are three issues that we wish to raise with the Minister.

**18.** Firstly, we believe that the Minister should consider whether, in future, the range of platforms or outlets with which notices are placed could be expanded. This could reach a wider audience and potentially attract a more diverse field of candidates. We believe that the Minister should reflect on this.

**19.** Second, we were surprised that the Welsh Government did not engage the services of a search consultancy. Such an approach would not have been unusual in appointments of this kind. We would be grateful if the Minister would clarify why a consultancy service was not used.

**20.** Third, given that the original advertisement for the role produced only one candidate who was considered to be competent for interview, we believe there is a role for the Welsh Government in identifying and analysing potential barriers to prospective applicants, and looking for ways to address these for future similar appointments.

**21.** The above observations relate to the Welsh Government's chosen recruitment process. They should not be considered to bring into doubt the suitability of the preferred candidate for the role.

## 3. The preferred candidate

**22.** Emma Woollett, the preferred candidate, has been Swansea Bay UHB's Interim Chair since July 2019. She was previously Vice-Chair of Swansea UHB from October 2017 to June 2019.

**23.** Emma Woollett has held executive, non-executive and advisory positions across both private and public sector industries including health, retail, utilities and rail. She started her career in the oil industry and, after a period as a management consultant supporting utilities worldwide, she joined Somerfield plc. in a business development and marketing role. Emma became Marketing Director for Kwik Save Stores following the merger with Somerfield plc. Since 2003, she has been providing governance advice to NHS hospitals. She was a non-executive director for University Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust from 2006, becoming Vice Chair in 2008.

**24.** In her response to the pre-appointment hearing questionnaire, the candidate outlined her current commitments which include being a lay member on the audit committee of Bristol Zoo.

### Our view

**25.** During the pre-appointment hearing, we had a wide-ranging discussion with the preferred candidate, Emma Woollett. This covered her experience of working in other organisations, as well as her time as Vice and then Interim Chair of Swansea Bay University Health Board, positions she has held collectively for the past two and a half years.

**26.** Drawing on these recent experiences, she set out what she considers to be the main challenges facing the Health Board, and her priorities for its future. She was also able to provide us with examples of changes she has implemented during her tenure.

**27.** We were left with the impression that the candidate has a clear vision of both the role itself and how she wishes to operate within it, intending to bring a focused, business approach to the role.

**28.** She has significant experience of working in both the private and public sectors, and this is something that we believe will be of value in her forthcoming role.

## 4. The Committee's conclusion

**Conclusion 1.** The Committee found no reason to oppose the appointment of the Welsh Government's preferred candidate, Emma Woollett.

## Pre-appointment hearing questionnaire

Following questions sent from the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee.

February 2020, in preparation for session on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

### Emma Woollett, Interim Chair, Swansea Bay University Health Board

#### Personal Background

**1. Do you have any business or financial connections, or other commitments, which might give rise to a conflict of interest in carrying out your duties, or impact on the time you are able to commit to the role?**

Conflicts of Interest

I have no business or financial connections that could give rise to a conflict of interest.

Commitments

I have other current commitments, for example lay member on the audit committee of Bristol Zoo, but my experience since my appointment as Interim Chair confirms that I have more than sufficient time to commit to the role.

**2. Have you ever held any post or undertaken any activity that might cast doubt on your political impartiality?**

No.

**3. How were you recruited: were you encouraged to apply, and if so, by whom?**

I was recruited by open competition and a full public appointments process.

I was encouraged to apply by colleagues at Swansea Bay University Health Board (SBUHB).

**4. Please explain how your experience to date has equipped you to fulfil your new responsibilities.**

Experienced Vice Chair of 2 large NHS organisations (including SBUHB) and Interim Chair for SBUHB since July 2019. This has given me a strong understanding of governance, significant experience of working with partners across a health system and experience of building an effective unitary board. The past 2 ½ years as Vice Chair and then Interim Chair at SBUHB has enabled me to understand the NHS in Wales at a national as well as a local level and to appreciate the opportunities we have for a more integrated and devolved health system.

Prior to becoming a non-executive, I had a successful executive career spanning a wide range of sectors including utilities and retail. This gave me experience in developing (and delivering) strategy, achieving turnaround in performance and building effective teams to deliver change.

Over the past 15 years, I have also undertaken a number of consultancy roles across the NHS in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, often supporting troubled organisations as they worked to improve governance, quality of care, operational performance and do so whilst making best use of financial resources. This has given me useful insights into how NHS organisations turn themselves around and some of the difficulties in doing so.

## Performance of the role

### 5. What will be your key priorities in your new role?

- To continue to develop an effective unitary board
- To continue to tighten governance and ward to board oversight of quality and performance
- To encourage the continued development of an open culture and the further embedding of our values throughout the organisation
- To focus board and organisation on delivering our strategy and de-escalation from Targeted Intervention
- To deepen local partnership relationships for the benefit of our population
- To play my part in a collaborative health system across Wales

### 6. What criteria should be used to judge your performance over your term of office?

Overall, the main criteria should be the effective and efficient delivery of SBUHB's strategic plans and operational performance (in particular de-escalation from Targeted Intervention), which is the responsibility of the whole board, including the Chief Executive and the executive team.

However, I lead the board and should be held accountable for:

- Providing visible, open and strategic leadership
- Building a stable, effective, visible board
- Ensuring appropriate governance arrangements
- Ensuring the organisation has the confidence of Welsh Government and the Welsh Assembly
- Developing relationships of trust with local partners and stakeholders



## The organisation

### 7. What criteria should be used to judge the performance of Swansea Bay University Health Board as a whole?

- De-escalation from Targeted Intervention
- Progress against delivery of our strategic ambitions
- To deliver both of these, we need motivated, supported, well trained staff

### 8. What do you see as the key risks to delivering Swansea Bay University Health Board's objectives?

In brief:

- Pandemics
- Cultural inertia
- Shortages in key staff groups
- Managing EU withdrawal

### 9. What do you consider to have been the main successes and failures of Swansea Bay University Health Board? What lessons can be learned from the failures?

Successes

- SBUHB delivers effective and safe care to hundreds of thousands of people every year
- Making good progress on developing and embedding our values (Caring for Each Other, Always Improving and Working Together). I firmly believe that having a strong, clear set of values that believe in is a critical success factor for any organisation
- The quality and innovation within so many of our clinical services – both specialist services provided at our hospitals and services developed within our community teams. This energy and innovation within our clinical teams is another critical factor for successfully delivering leading edge, high quality care.

Failures

- Our Targeted Intervention status, which is driven by inadequate delivery in some core areas of performance, including:
  - Unscheduled care
  - Planned care
  - Financial deficit

## Learning

- The importance of a positive, open organisational culture that encourages two way feedback and communication
- The importance of good governance, including effective Independent Member scrutiny and challenge
- That focusing our efforts on providing high quality services will deliver sustainable operational and financial performance
- The value of partnership work to deliver better, more effective care, as evidenced by our Hospital 2 Home work through the Regional Partnership Board for example
- The importance of communicating with public and stakeholders in a timely way to maintain confidence and build awareness of issues we are facing and decisions we need to take

## **10. What is your assessment of the public profile and reputation of the organisation?**

Given the integrated nature of the NHS in Wales and the proximity between local issues and national debate and coverage, it is likely that SBUHB's public profile and reputation is heavily influenced by perceptions of NHS Wales more broadly – that is, as a cherished institution, but one that is facing significant challenges to meet rising demand.

I am conscious that the Andrews *Trusted to Care* report is also likely to continue to feature strongly in perceptions of the organisation. The legacy of the report and the actions that came from it have been crucial for the organisation, and are, I believe, bearing fruit.

Perceptions are, of course, strongly formed by personal experience, whether directly or indirectly via the care provided to loved ones. The Health Board's Friends and Family test show that the vast majority of people experiencing care would be happy to recommend to others.

The overall public perception is of an organisation that has been challenged, but also one that has stabilised and is now on an upward trajectory.