

**Minutes of the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI)
Board Meeting held in AFBI Newforge and via WebEx
on Thursday 12 January 2023 at 10.00hrs**

Board Members

Mr Colin Coffey, Chair	Mr Bill Montgomery
Mrs Roberta Brownlee, Deputy Chair	Mr Ian Murphy
Ms Kate Burns	Mr Tim McClelland
Mr Martyn Blair	Ms Therese Rafferty
Mr David Campbell	Prof Sally Shortall
Mrs Daphne Johnston	Mr Tom Tynan
Mr Alan Moore	Mr Tom Wright

AFBI Boardroom Apprentice

Mr Jonathan Craig

AFBI Executive:

Dr Stanley McDowell, Chief Executive Officer
Prof Elizabeth Magowan, Director of Sustainable Agri-Food Sciences Division
Mr Ivor Johnston, Interim Director of Finance & Corporate Affairs Division
Dr Alastair Douglas, Director of Veterinary Sciences Division
Mr Pieter-Jan Schön, Director of Environment and Marine Sciences Division

In Attendance

Mr Glenn Montgomery, Head of Governance and Performance
Mr James Adams, AFBI Secretariat

Visitor

Ms Francine Manikpure, AFBI Sponsor Branch (DAERA)

1. Welcome and Introduction

ACTION

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, in particular Ms Manikpure who had been invited to meet with the Board following her appointment as the Head of DAERA's AFBI Sponsor Branch (ASB).

2. Apologies

There were no apologies to record.

3. Conflicts of Interest Declaration

There were no conflicts of interest declared. The Chair informed attendees of a change to his Register of Interests which will be updated.

4. Draft Minutes of Board Meeting held on 1 December 2022

The draft minutes of the Board Meeting held on 1 December 2022 were accepted as an accurate and fair representation of the meeting.

4.1 Action Sheet from Board Meeting held on 1 December 2022

The Board noted that the actions as per the Action Sheet had been completed or formed part of the agenda.

5. Finance & Business

5.1 Finance Update Report

For the benefit of Board members who had yet to complete a full year on the AFBI Board, the Chair explained the process and past experiences around in-year budgeting including a number of complexities.

Mr Johnston then presented the Finance update paper and highlighted a number of key issues including the following:

- Budget Update 2022-23 – All bids and easements proposed in the Third Monitoring round had been approved. A year-end underspend within the 1% budget tolerance is currently projected. Finance business partners will continue to work closely with budget holders regarding the budget position and adjustment made where necessary to remain with budget tolerances.
- AFBI Budget 2023-24 – Department of Finance (DoF) have advised that focus is now on a 1 year period for future years Budget. AFBI is reviewing the previously submitted '*Budget 2023-26 Information*

Gathering Exercise' to determine if updates are required in relation to 2023-24.

- 2021-22 Annual Report and Accounts - The Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) is progressing the audit of the 2021-22 Annual Report & Accounts. Mr Johnston is to meet with the NIAO tomorrow to discuss progress. He will keep the Board Chair and the Chair of the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee informed of any developments. IJ
- Finance System - There remains a backlog in issuing small value invoices for laboratory testing and Finance is actioning plans to address this. It was noted that the backlog was not system related. In the next few months, the Chair also asked that the Board be informed of any concerns and/or mitigating actions in relation to the two-year period before a new financial system could be procured and operational. IJ

6. Governance Issues

6.1 Risk Management

6.1.1 *Reports of New or Emerging Risks*

There were no reports of any new or emerging risks.

The Risk Review Group met recently to review the AFBI Corporate Risk Register. An updated version will be presented to the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee and the Board in due course. The Board also noted the permanent appointment of the Head of Health & Safety Compliance Branch and that they will be invited to a future Board meeting.

6.2 AFBI Corporate Plan 2022-2026

The CEO presented an advanced draft of the AFBI Corporate Plan 2023-2027 and gave an overview of the five strategic priorities.

The Board welcomed the latest draft and was impressed with the overall content and presentation. It was noted that new Corporate Plan clearly articulates the high level outcomes which AFBI's science programmes aim to achieve alongside the continued modernisation and investment systems, people and infrastructure over the next corporate plan period. In discussions a number of minor suggestions

were made, particularly in relation to the '*Strategic Planning Framework*' section, and the Executive agreed to review the narrative.

It was also noted that, following previous Board approval, the new AFBI Vision and Purpose had been launched to staff.

There was also a wider discussion on communications and how initiatives such as online videos and seminars could support large corporate documents and assist in reaching the appropriate target audiences. It was also noted that the AFBI Science Strategy to 2030 which is currently under development, would provide greater detail in terms of scientific impacts and outcomes.

7. Chair's Remarks

The Chair informed the Board that he will meet with the DAERA Permanent Secretary later this week.

8. Any Other Business

There were no additional items of business.

Ms Manikpure thanked the Board for inviting her to attend the Board meeting and that she will report the key themes discussed to DAERA colleagues.

9. Review of Board Meeting Effectiveness

The Board was content the meeting had been effective.

10. Date of Next Meeting

The next AFBI Board Meeting will be held on Thursday 2 February 2023.