



**Minutes of the Meeting of the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute  
(AFBI) Board  
held at  
AFBI Crossnacreevy  
on Wednesday 20 April 2011 at 10.00 am**

**Present – Board Members**

Prof David McDowell,  
Deputy Chairperson  
Mr Trevor Hinds  
Prof Grace Mulcahy  
Mr Seamus McCaffrey  
Mr Bob McCann  
Mrs Hilary McCartan  
Prof Stewart McNulty  
Mr James Noble  
Mr John Rankin  
Mrs Hilda Stewart  
Mr Michael Walker

**In Attendance - AFBI Executive**

Dr Seamus Kennedy, CEO  
Dr Michael Camlin, DCEO  
Dr David Bryson, DCEO (Acting)  
Mr Joel Ferguson, Head of Corporate Services Division (Acting)  
Mr Paul Brennan, Head of Human Resources  
Mr Venkat Deshpande, Head of Finance  
Mr Stephen Cousins, AFBI Secretariat

**1. Welcome and Introduction**

**Action**

The meeting was opened with a word of welcome from Prof McDowell who was Chair in the absence of Mr Hogan.

Prof McDowell issued a formal welcome to Mrs McCartan and Mr McCann who were attending their first meeting as AFBI Board members.

Prof McDowell also commented on the location of today's meeting at Crossnacreevy and acknowledged the importance of visiting various AFBI sites and the opportunity that this afforded the Board in terms of meeting the staff and obtaining an insight into the work being done.

**2. Apologies**

Apologies were received on behalf of Mr Sean Hogan, AFBI Chair, Mr Alan McKeown, Board Member and Dr Arthur Gilmour, DCEO.

**3. Conflict of Interests Declaration**

There were no "*Conflict of Interests*" declared.

**4. Draft Minutes of the Previous Board Meeting held on 23 March 2011** **Action**

On a proposal from Mr Hinds, seconded by Mrs McCartan, the Board approved the draft minutes from the previous Board meeting held on 23 March 2011 subject to the following addition:

Item 12.1 – AFBI Business Plan 2011/12 & AFBI Corporate Plan 2011/12 to 2014/15

Insert the following paragraph at the end of this item –

*“Following further discussion the Board agreed that a meeting with the DARD Departmental Board should take place as soon as possible (within this calendar year 2011/12) to discuss the implications for Board members in the event of a possible overspend in the 2011/12 budget.”*

**Sec**

**5. Matters Arising/Action Points from Previous AFBI Board Meeting held on 23 March 2011**

The Chair proceeded on the basis that any Matters Arising or Action Points from the previous AFBI Board meeting held on 23 March 2011 had been resolved or would be addressed during the course of the meeting with the exception of:

**5.1** Meeting with Representatives of the Northern Ireland Science Park (NISP) – (Item 5.2 – Mins 23 03 11)

There have been no further developments since the last meeting with representatives from NISP but the Executive agreed that it would provide the Board with a paper at the next Board meeting detailing the key advantages and disadvantages of any potential relocation of some of AFBI’s innovation activities to the NISP.

**Exec**

**5.2** Equal Pay Deal (EPD) – (Item 5.3 – Mins 23 03 11)

The Board were advised that Trade Union Side (TUS) had responded to AFBI Management’s request for comments and the Executive are now working on a Business Case to be approved by DARD and DFP before the EPD is implemented.

However, as the Business Case only applies to the period since AFBI’s creation, the Executive are also having to seek a legal opinion in respect of a request from TUS that AFBI sign a Memorandum of Understanding that would enable TUS to pursue AFBI and/or DARD for the three-year period prior to AFBI’s creation.

The Executive advised that there was no action for the Board to consider at this point in time but the Executive agreed to keep the Board informed of developments.

**Exec**

## Action

### 5.3 Terms of Reference (ToR) for Organisational Review of AFBI – (Item 11.1 – Mins 23 03 11)

The Executive circulated a further revised draft Terms of Reference.

Following discussion the Board were formally content for the Executive to proceed on the basis that the Executive –

- Clarify with DARD their request to insert reference to “*associated costings*” in the draft ToR. The Board was of the opinion that any costings produced should only be headline or estimated costs.
- Amend the dates listed under the final section headed “*Period of Contract*”.
- Keep the Board informed of progress and ensure that the final report has deliverable recommendations.

The Executive agreed to update the draft Terms of Reference for the Organisational Review of AFBI and proceed on the basis outlined by the Board.

Exec

*Prof Mulcahy entered the meeting.*

### 5.4 AFBI Business Plan 2011/12 & AFBI Corporate Plan 2011/12 to 2014/15 – (Item 12.1 – Mins 23 03 11)

The Executive distributed revised copies of both the Business Plan for 2011/12 and Corporate Plan for 2011/12 to 2014/15 and the CEO apologised for the late circulation of the papers.

In presenting the papers the Board were advised that the substantive area for consideration in the revised Business Plan for 2011/12 was the financial section.

In response, the Board recognised the need for the Business Plan to be positive while at the same time acknowledging the need to highlight the risk of not being able to achieve a balanced budget. In this respect the Board suggested that when submitting the Business Plan to DARD, the Executive should also include a separate note detailing the key issues facing AFBI.

Following comments the AFBI Board accepted the changes to the Business Plan since it was last presented to the AFBI Board but asked that the Executive strengthen the wording based on the comments made during this Board meeting.

Exec

The Board also suggested that the Executive consider registering the risk of AFBI not being able to balance the budget on the DARD AFBI Risk Registers. DARD may also wish to reflect this risk on DARD’s Risk

Register.

**Action**

The Board acknowledged that the presentation of the Business and Corporate Plans to the DARD Departmental Board on Monday 9 May 2011 would be critical but again underlined the importance of a meeting of the AFBI and DARD Boards to help strengthen the partnership approach that is required to meet the challenges ahead.

As a final note, the Executive asked the Board to consider both documents and provide comments no later than Wednesday 27 April 2011.

**Board  
Members**

## **6. Chairman's Business**

In the absence of Mr Hogan, the Deputy Chair had nothing to report.

### **6.1 Report from Chief Executive Officer**

The CEO took the opportunity to appraise the Board of a number of items:

**6.1.1** *Death of Mr George Dunstall* – the CEO informed the Board that Mr Dunstall, a member of staff of the Agri-Food and Environmental Science Division, had passed away following a sudden illness. The Board expressed its sympathy and asked that the CEO convey its condolences to his widow.

**Exec**

**6.1.2** *Visitations* – a number of important visits have been made to AFBI in recent weeks and the Board noted the relevant details.

**6.1.3** *Accreditation* – steady progress is continuing to be made and staff are fully committed to achieving the relevant accreditation standard for all tests for which there is a customer requirement for accreditation.

A series of inspection visits have been completed recently and the reports have been highly complimentary of the quality of analytical testing work being carried out.

The role of the Central Quality Unit at VSD was highlighted and the Board asked the Executive to consider a suitable date for staff of the Unit to make a presentation to the AFBI Board.

**Exec**

**6.1.4** *Dioxins* – AFBI will have a presence on a food incident management group being set-up as one of the recommendations arising from the McKenzie report into the 2008 dioxin feed contamination incident.

<b>7.</b>	<b>Governance Issues – Standing Items</b>	<b>Action</b>
<b>7.1</b>	<u>AFBI Risk Management</u>	
<b>7.1.1</b>	<i>Review of AFBI Risk Management Processes</i>	
	<p>The AFBI Internal Audit Review of AFBI’s Risk Management Processes is currently well underway with a meeting scheduled for 3 May 2011 during which it is hoped that the new format of the AFBI Corporate Risk Register can be agreed.</p>	
<b>7.1.2</b>	<i>Reports of New or Emerging Risks</i>	
	<p>The Executive made the Board aware of difficulties that were being encountered in completion of the refurbishment of an Isolation Laboratory at AFBI Stormont and the associated risks to AFBI’s ability to respond to an animal disease emergency. The Executive suggested that the issues are so significant as to warrant inclusion in the AFBI Corporate Risk Register.</p> <p>The Board accepted the Executive’s concerns and agreed that the risk was such that it should be included in the AFBI Corporate Risk Register.</p> <p>On a proposal from the Executive the Board agreed that “<i>Reports from Divisions</i>” should be included as a standing item on the Board agenda.</p>	
		<b>Sec</b>
<b>7.2</b>	<u>Whistleblowing and Fraud</u>	
	<p>There were no new or continuing cases of whistleblowing or fraud to report.</p>	
<b>7.3</b>	<u>Health and Safety</u>	
	<p>There were no accidents, incidents or “<i>near misses</i>” to report.</p>	
<b>8.</b>	<b>Personnel Issues</b>	
<b>8.1</b>	<u>Starters and Leavers Report</u>	
	<p>The Board were pleased to note the savings being made but accepted that the report in its current format is limited as it does not identify which Divisions, Branches or grades may be taking the strain. The Board suggested that a future report should also include information on attendance figures and details on AFBI’s Management of Attendance.</p> <p>In response the Executive suggested that “<i>Personnel</i>” could be a strategic item for consideration and discussion at a future AFBI Board meeting.</p>	
		<b>Exec</b>

<b>9.</b>	<b>Finance</b>	<b>Action</b>
<b>9.1</b>	<u>AFBI Budget Monitoring Report as at 31 March 2011</u>	
	The Executive presented the AFBI Budget Monitoring Report for the month ending 31 March 2011.	
	In commenting on the report, the Board congratulated the Executive on balancing the budget for 2010/11 and agreed that the Chair, Mr Hogan formally recognise the efforts made by AFBI Finance.	<b>Chair</b>
	The Executive informed the Board that it had been made aware that the DARD Departmental Board had expressed concerns in relation to financial management in AFBI. The CEO reported that since the issue had come to light he had been in contact with DARD and was hopeful that any concerns that DARD had have been resolved. He had also agreed that a single monthly budget report should be sufficient to allow the AFBI and DARD Boards to carry out their monitoring functions. The Executive will work with the AFBI Board Finance Committee, with input from DARD, to design a suitable reporting template.	
	Following discussion, the Board were content for the newly formed Finance Committee and the Executive to consider and agree a reporting format that would be acceptable to all parties including DARD and asked that this matter be placed on the agenda for the forthcoming Finance Committee meeting.	<b>Sec</b>
<b>9.2</b>	<u>Cashflow Report 2010/11 as at 11 April 2011</u>	
	The Cashflow Report was presented and noted by the Board.	
<b>10.</b>	<b>Implementation of Financial Management Accounting System</b>	
	The Executive informed the Board that no major issues had been encountered with the new system and that the speed of progress had been better than expected.	
<b>11.</b>	<b>AFBI Board Sub-Committees</b>	
<b>11.1</b>	<u>Suggested Membership of AFBI Board Sub-Committees for 2011/12</u>	
	On a proposal from Prof McNulty, seconded by Mr Noble, the Board approved the proposed membership of AFBI Board Sub-Committees for 2011/12.	

- 11.2**    AFBI Audit Committee – Terms of Reference **Action**
- On a proposal from Mr Hinds, seconded by Prof McNulty, the Board approved the Terms of Reference for the AFBI Audit Committee subject to the Secretary making the agreed changes. **Sec**
- 11.3**    AFBI Strategy Committee – Terms of Reference
- On a proposal from Mr Walker, seconded by Mrs McCartan, the Board were content to approve the Terms of Reference for the AFBI Board Strategy Committee.
- 11.4**    AFBI Finance Committee – Terms of Reference
- On a proposal from Mr Hinds, seconded by Prof Mulcahy, the Board approved the Terms of Reference for the AFBI Finance Committee subject to the Secretary making the agreed changes. **Sec**
- 12.    Report from AFBI Strategy Committee Meeting held on 23 March 2011**
- The draft minutes from the recent meeting of the AFBI Strategy Committee held on 23 March 2011 were circulated to the Board and Mr Walker, Chair of the AFBI Strategy Committee provided the Board with a verbal report on the proceedings.
- The Board noted the draft minutes and the comments of the Chair of the Strategy Committee, Mr Walker and thanked the Strategy Committee for the work it is undertaking on behalf of the Board.
- 13.    Strategic Item – Business Development and Marketing Strategy**
- The Executive gave a presentation to the Board on recent developments and progress on the implementation of the AFBI Business Development and Marketing Strategy.
- The Board were content to note and were encouraged by the progress being made.
- 14.    Any Other Business**
- 14.1**    Rolling Database of Issues Raised at Board Meetings
- The Board noted the contents of the Rolling Database.
- 14.2**    Proposed Meeting with DARD Departmental Board
- The Chair has written to the DARD Permanent Secretary, Mr Gerry Lavery and is awaiting a response.

The Chief Executive Officer confirmed that the matter had been raised during a recent meeting he had held with Dr Mark Browne, DARD Deputy Permanent Secretary. It was hoped that a meeting will be arranged as soon as possible after the Northern Ireland Assembly election to be held on 5 May 2011.

**14.3** Arrangements for Balmoral Show

The Board acknowledged receipt of an e-mail outlining the arrangements for this event and Board members will respond accordingly if they wish to attend.

**14.4** Proposals for AFBI Open Meeting

Following discussion, the Board agreed to hold the Open Meeting in June 2011 subject to the 2009/10 NIAO Review of the AFBI Accounts being completed in sufficient time for the Executive to be in a position to give stakeholders a minimum of six weeks notice. If this is not possible, the Open Meeting will take place in the Autumn.

**15. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the AFBI Board will be held on Wednesday 25 May 2011 in the AFBI Boardroom, AFBI (HQ) Newforge.

***Presentation and Tour***

*A presentation was given to Board members on the work being carried out at AFBI Crossnacreevy following which Board members were then given a tour of AFBI Crossnacreevy.*

*The Board asked the Executive to thank all the staff involved for a very informative presentation and tour.*

**Exec**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Chairperson)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_