



**Minutes of the Meeting of the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute
(AFBI) Board
held at
AFBI (HQ) Newforge
on Wednesday 22 June 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
Mr Alan McKeown
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 Arthur Gilmour, DCEO (Acting)
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

Prof McDowell, Deputy Chairperson chaired the meeting in the absence of Mr Hogan and opened proceedings with a word of welcome.

2. Apologies

An apology was received on behalf of Mr Hogan.

3. Conflict of Interests Declaration

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

4. Draft Minutes of the Previous Board Meeting held on 25 May 2011

On a proposal from Mr Hinds, seconded by Mrs Stewart, the Board approved the draft minutes from the previous Board meeting held on 25 May 2011 without amendment.

5. Matters Arising/Action Points from Previous AFBI Board Meeting held on 25 May 2011 **Action**

The Chair proceeded on the basis that any Matters Arising or Action Points from the previous AFBI Board meeting held on 25 May 2011 had been resolved or would be addressed during the course of the meeting except for:

5.1 Equal Pay Deal – (Item 5.1 – Mins 25 05 11)

The Executive confirmed that AFBI had received legal advice from AFBI's solicitors in relation to this matter. AFBI's legal advice has been forwarded to DARD for further consideration and AFBI are waiting a response.

5.2 AFBI Business Plan 2011/12 and AFBI Corporate Plan 2011/12 to 2014/15 – (Item 5.3 – Mins 25 05 11)

The Executive thanked Board members for their input and informed the Board that revised Plans had been presented to the DARD Board on 13 June 2011 when both had been approved. AFBI is now awaiting overall approval from the Department of Finance and Personnel.

5.3 AFBI Representative in the USA – (Item 7.4 – Mins 25 05 11)

A job specification has been drafted and targets have been agreed. The recruitment will be taken forward by the Northern Ireland Bureau. The recruitment process should be completed within the next few months.

The Executive took the opportunity to record its appreciation and gratitude for the excellent support provided by the Northern Ireland Bureau and the contacts it has made and is continuing to make on behalf of AFBI.

5.4 Accident Reporting – (Item 8.3.1 – Mins 25 05 11)

AFBI has sought legal advice on the format of the proposed new forms that the institute intends to use in the accident reporting process.

5.5 Promotional Opportunity – (Item 8.3.2 – Mins 25 05 11)

The Executive confirmed that it had contacted the Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland (HSENI) with an offer to make AFBI's facilities available to it for promotional activities should it so require. In response the HSENI thanked AFBI for its offer.

5.6 Finance/Commercial Interests – (Item 11 – Mins 25 05 11)

The Executive informed the Board that since the date of the last meeting it had learnt that two members of AFBI staff have been recruited by a

commercial company.

Action

In response the Board acknowledged the difficulties and exposure that exists for AFBI staff retention especially in the commercial environment and queried if anything could be included in employment terms and conditions that would safeguard against the loss of staff in this way. The Executive indicated that Northern Ireland Civil Service terms and conditions apply to AFBI staff and there are only very limited conditions attached to staff taking up employment in the private sector.

Mr McKeown suggested that AFBI review its commercial terms and conditions and ascertain if there is a “non-solicitation” clause contained within these that might offer some level of protection against employee loss to private sector companies or organisations.

The issue of protection of proprietary intellectual property was also discussed.

5.7 AFBI Open Meeting – (Item 19.2 – Mins 25 05 11)

The Executive reported that it had received confirmation that the Northern Ireland Comptroller and Auditor General had signed-off on the AFBI Accounts for 2009/10 and this would enable the AFBI Annual Report and Statement of Accounts for 2009/10 to be laid before the Assembly.

The Board were pleased to note this latest development and it was agreed that the AFBI Open Meeting be held on Wednesday 28 September 2011 at AFBI Hillsborough. In order to ensure as full attendance as possible the Board asked that invitations to stakeholders and customers now be issued.

Exec

6. Chairman’s Business

In the absence of Mr Hogan there were no issues to report.

7. CEO’s Report

In his report to the Board, the CEO highlighted a number of issues.

7.1 AFBI Annual Report and Statement of Accounts 2009/10

As reported earlier in the meeting, the AFBI Accounts for 2009/10 have now been signed-off by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

The Board congratulated the Executive on their contribution in the achievement of this outcome.

7.2 AFBI Business Plan 2011/12 and AFBI Corporate Plan 2011/12 to 2014/15

Both the Business Plan and the Corporate Plan have now been approved

by the DARD Board and will or have been forwarded to DFP for overall approval. **Action**

It was also noted that the DARD Board had agreed that the risk of AFBI commercial income falling short of target and the risk of the VSD main building coming out of use should be shared with DFP.

7.3 DARD Evidence and Innovation Fund

The Executive confirmed that it had received a list of DARD-approved projects to receive funding. A potential difficulty is that not all DARD's short-term R&D requirements match AFBI's capacities and strategic direction.

In further discussion it was agreed that AFBI should broaden its public sector customer base with an aim of raising its profile throughout all of the Northern Ireland Executive Department's as well as influencing the European Union (EU) Commission.

To assist AFBI in achieving its aims, the Board suggested that the Executive make contact with the United Kingdom permanent representatives in the EU, including Northern Ireland's elected MEPs, and the Northern Ireland Office in Brussels. Potential interaction with Defra was also discussed. **Exec**

7.4 Investors in People (IiP)

Having met with representatives from IiP and agreed an action plan twelve months ago, a further inspection will now take place in November 2011 when AFBI will be tested against recognised IiP standards.

7.5 Fraud Awareness Training

This training is mandatory for all AFBI staff and is currently being rolled out across the organisation.

7.6 HR Connect – Implementation of Industrial Staff Pay Remit

HR Connect have implemented the pay remit for industrial staff outside the recognised approval process and AFBI is now in the process of attempting to rectify the situation by obtaining retrospective approval from DFP. The CEO stated that he will be writing to the Director of Shared Services Enterprise on this issue. **CEO**

After consideration the Board agreed that the matter should also be referred to the AFBI Board Finance Sub-Committee at its meeting on 29 June 2011 for further consideration. **Finance Sub-Cmt**

7.7 Collaboration Opportunity

The Board were notified of a possible collaboration opportunity with a

local company. After consideration the Board signified that it was willing to approve the collaboration in principle subject to the Executive presenting a paper providing further information at the next AFBI Board meeting (24 August 2011).

Action
Exec
Action

7.8 Open Day – AFBI Bushmills (Salmon Station)

The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) will be hosting an Open Day on Wednesday 6 July 2011. The AFBI Chair, Mr Hogan has received an invitation.

8. Governance Issues

8.1 Risk Management

There were no reports of any new or emerging risks to the organisation.

8.2 Whistleblowing and Fraud

There were no reports of any accidents or near misses.

9. Personnel Issues

9.1 Starters and Leavers Report as at 31 May 2011

The Board were content to note the “*Starters and Leavers Report*” for the period ending 31 May 2011.

9.2 Applications for Early Retirement

AFBI HR received eighteen expressions of interest from staff regarding the “element B” early retirement scheme. Eight subsequent applications are now being processed.

10. Finance

10.1 Allocation of AFBI Budget 2011/12

A paper seeking Board approval for the allocation of the AFBI Budget for 2011/12 was presented to the Board.

During the discussion that followed the Executive confirmed that the budget had been agreed with DARD and assured the Board that monitoring will be undertaken on a monthly basis.

In response the Board signified that it was content with the information provided but asked that in future some additional information be provided by way of explanatory notes.

Exec

On a proposal by Mr Walker, seconded by Mr Rankin the Board approved the allocation of the AFBI Budget for 2011/12.

10.2	<u>Cashflow Report</u>	Action
	The AFBI Cashflow Report detailing the position at 10 June 2011 was presented by the Executive.	
	The Board was content to note the content of this report.	
10.3	<u>Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) Review of AFBI Accounts 2010/11</u>	
	The Executive reported that the NIAO Review of AFBI Accounts 2010/11 was underway with a draft of the accounts now being prepared for submission to the NIAO by Friday 8 July 2011. It is hoped that the review will be completed by the end of September 2011.	
11.	Strategic Item – Risk Management	
	The Executive presented the Board with a revised version of the AFBI Corporate Risk Register (CRR) which had resulted from the Review of AFBI's Risk Management Processes undertaken by AFBI's Internal Auditors.	
	As part of this review, the Executive informed the Board that it would be updating AFBI's Risk Management Strategy with the aim of having this completed and available for the meeting of the AFBI Audit Committee in September 2011. If the Audit Committee is content, the Strategy will then be presented to the AFBI Board for formal approval at the Board meeting in October 2011.	Exec
	In the discussion that followed the Board made a number of suggestions and comments –	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Board accepted that AFBI's Corporate Risks were a matter for the Board and agreed that in future it would consider individual risks at its monthly meetings. The Executive stated that most of the strategic topics that come before the Board each month relate to corporate risks but would review these to ensure that they relate to those in the new format risk register. This link would also be explicitly highlighted on the agenda in respect of each Board meeting. 	AFBI Board
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Executive agreed to re-consider the areas of "<i>inherited</i>" and "<i>residual</i>" risk and how these are "<i>scored</i>". 	Exec
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Board informed the Executive that it was content <i>with</i> the new <i>format</i> and presentation of the CRR <i>but</i> requested further information on the scoring mechanism. 	Exec
	It was agreed that the Executive will provide an explanatory paper providing clarity on the new scoring mechanism at the next meeting of the AFBI Board (August 2011).	Exec

12. Collaboration Agreement between AFBI and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (RoI) (DAFF) Action

A copy of a draft Collaboration Agreement between AFBI and DAFF's Backweston veterinary laboratory was issued to the Board.

In presenting the document, the Executive outlined the background and confirmed that both DARD and DAFF were content. The Executive was now seeking AFBI Board approval.

Following consideration the Board gave its approval to the Agreement in principle subject to clarity on a number of issues which the Executive agreed to provide at the next AFBI Board meeting.

Exec

The issues that the Board identified were –

- The potential inclusion of a non-solicitation clause.
- Identification of other clauses that would remain in operation even after the cessation of the Collaboration Agreement.
- Confirmation that AFBI has the appropriate authority to offer indemnities.

13. Reports from Divisions

Oral reports on some of the key issues and events taking place in the four AFBI Divisions were given to the Board.

The Board were very appreciative of the reports and acknowledged the considerable work being undertaken by the various Branches within each of the Divisions.

In accepting the reports the Board asked that in future one-page written summaries be provided in advance of the meeting to enable Board members to obtain a better understanding and to seek further information or clarity, if it was required, during the meeting. This also applied to the CEO's report.

Exec

The Executive accepted the Board's request and agreed to present written summary reports at future meetings.

14. Any Other Business

14.1 Rolling Database of Issues Raised at Previous AFBI Board Meetings

The Board were content to note the changes made to the Rolling Database of Issues since the previous meeting and also agreed to a number of proposed changes:

- Account NI – on the basis that the new Financial Management and Accounting System has been introduced and is functional, this matter

can be regarded as complete.

Action

- Establishment of an AFBI Board Finance Sub-Committee – on the basis that a Finance Sub-Committee has been established and held its first meeting on 18 May 2011, this matter can be regarded as complete.

14.2 Tribute to AFBI

The Board were notified of a recent potential collaboration opportunity involving AFBI and a commercial company. In particular the Board were pleased to note the speed of response made by the Head of AFBI's Chemical Surveillance Branch, Dr G Kennedy in supplying relevant information. The Executive were asked to relay the thanks of the Board to Dr G Kennedy and his colleagues.

Exec

14.3 AFBI Vision and Mission Statement

The attention of the Board was drawn to the amended versions of AFBI's Vision and Mission Statements as included in the recently approved Corporate Plan and sought its approval to display these in the Boardroom. The Board was content but would like to see these displayed in a more prominent position. The Executive indicated that the statements would also be displayed in each AFBI site.

Exec

15. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the AFBI Board will be held on Wednesday 24 August 2011 at AFBI Bushmills (Salmon Station).

Presentation

Following conclusion of business the AFBI Board was given a presentation and overview of the work being carried out by Biometrics and Information Systems Branch (BISB).

The Board expressed its appreciation to the staff involved and asked that a vote of thanks and appreciation be relayed to all those working within BISB.

Exec

Signed: _____
(Chairperson)

Date: _____