



**Minutes of the Meeting of the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute
(AFBI) Board
held at
AFBI (HQ) Newforge
on Wednesday 23 March 2011 at 10.00 am**

Present – Board Members

Mr Sean Hogan, Chairperson
Prof David McDowell, Deputy
Chairperson
Mr Kieran Campbell
Mr Trevor Hinds
Dr Michael Hollywood
Prof Grace Mulcahy
Mr Seamus McCaffrey
Mr Alan McKeown
Prof Stewart McNulty
Mr James Noble
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 James Adams, AFBI Secretariat

Observer

Mrs Hilary McCartan

1. Welcome and Introduction

Action

The Chair opened the meeting with a word of welcome to all present particularly Mrs Hilary McCartan who would be joining the AFBI Board from 1 April 2011 (subject to formalities being completed). The Chair also made reference to Mr Bob McCann who will also be joining the Board 1 April 2011 (subject to formalities being completed) but unfortunately Mr McCann was unable to attend the meeting.

2. Apologies

An apology was submitted by Mr John Rankin.

3. Conflict of Interests Declaration

There were no “*Conflict of Interests*” declared.

4. Draft Minutes of the Previous Board Meeting held on 23 February 2011

On a proposal from Mr Hinds, seconded by Mrs Stewart, the AFBI Board approved the draft minutes of the previous Board meeting held 23

February 2011 without amendment.

Action

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

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

5.1 AFBI Representation in the USA (Item 5.1 – Mins 23 02 11)

The Board acknowledged that this matter is a work in progress. The Executive informed the Board that AFBI hope to have the post filled by Autumn 2011 for an initial 18-month period.

5.2 Meeting with Representatives of the Northern Ireland Science Park (Item 6.2 – Mins 23 02 11)

The Chair and the CEO provided a report to the Board on a recent visit to the Northern Ireland Science Park.

On the foot of the report the Board asked the Executive to let it have sight of a paper detailing the key advantages and disadvantages arising from the visit and the potential for future collaboration between AFBI and NISP.

Exec

5.3 Equal Pay Deal (Item 14.1 – Mins 23 02 11)

The Executive confirmed that this was a matter of work in progress and agreed to provide the Board with an update at the next meeting.

Exec

6. Chairman's Business

6.1 Appointment to the Board of Northern Ireland Water

The Chair informed the attendees that he had recently been appointed Chairman of Northern Ireland Water. The Chair reassured the Board that this new appointment will not have a negative impact on his current position as Chair of the AFBI Board.

The Board offered their congratulations and wished Mr Hogan every success in his new appointment.

6.2 Retirement of Dr Michael Hollywood and Mr Kieran Campbell

The Chair referred to Dr Michael Hollywood and Mr Kieran Campbell who would be leaving the AFBI Board on 31 March 2011 following completion of their Term of Office.

The Chair acknowledged Dr Hollywood's and Mr Campbell's role in defining systems and processes, particularly in the areas of corporate

governance, during the formative years of AFBI. The assurances received from the AFBI Audit Committee had been a great comfort to the Chair, and Mr Hogan wished both every success in the future.

In response, Mr Campbell thanked the Chair for his kind words, stated that it had been a pleasure to serve on the AFBI Board and commented on the respect he held for his fellow Board colleagues. Dr Hollywood echoed the sentiments of Mr Campbell and paid tribute to the Chair and his Board colleagues on the constructive and positive atmosphere in which the AFBI Board had conducted its business.

7. Governance Issues – Standing Items

7.1 AFBI Risk Management – Reports of any new risks

The Executive reported that there were no new risks to declare.

7.2 Whistleblowing and Fraud – Reports of any new cases

There are no new cases of whistleblowing or fraud to report.

7.3 Health and Safety – Reports of any major accidents or near misses

There were no incidents or near misses to report.

8. Personnel Issues

8.1 AFBI Starters and Leavers Report as at 28 February 2011

The Executive presented the AFBI “Starters and Leavers” report detailing the position at 28 February 2011.

In presenting the report the Executive outlined savings to date with regard to staff in post, partial retirement and noted a potential for future savings due to operational changes in the recruitment of seasonal workers.

However, the Executive also asked the Board to note that because of the continuing loss of key skills in some areas through retirements, some external recruitment will be required in the near future. The potential for savings through natural wastage will not therefore be as great as in the past year.

The Board accepted that it would be necessary to replenish skills in some areas through external recruitment.

8.2 Pensions Issue – update

The Executive were pleased to report that the pensions issue had been resolved and the cessation payment has been made to the Northern Ireland Local Government Officers Superannuation Committee (NILGOSC).

In response, the Board requested that the Executive convey its thanks and appreciation to all AFBI staff who had been involved in bringing this long and arduous process to a conclusion.

Prof Grace Mulcahy entered the meeting.

9. Finance

9.1 Financial Reporting

9.1.1 *AFBI Budget Monitoring Report at 28 February 2011*

The Executive presented the AFBI Budget Monitoring Report as at 28 February 2011.

In commenting on the report the Executive advised the Board that it had received notification of additional royalty payments to be received via Queens University. The Board also noted the improved figures in relation to receipt of income compared to the corresponding time point last year.

In relation to capital expenditure, the Executive confirmed that it had received assurances from the divisions that procurement was on target, that items will be on site prior to year end, and that the capital budget would be expended by 31 March.

9.1.2 *Cashflow Report 2010/11 as at 15 March 2011*

The Board noted the details of the Cashflow Report 2010/11 as at 15 March 2011.

The Executive advised the Board that current indications are that the closing bank balance would remain on target.

The Board commended the ongoing work of the AFBI budget holders, especially in light of the almost 25% of revenue now generated outside grant-in-aid and the lack of year-end flexibility.

10. Update on Implementation of Financial Management Accounting System

The Executive assured the Board that the implementation of the in-house Financial Management Accounting System was still on target. Training for finance staff and divisional purchasers and approvers, and testing of the system will be completed shortly.

The Executive acknowledged the efforts of the AFBI Finance staff and the excellent support received from Account NI in assisting AFBI to migrate to the new accounting system.

11. Review of Organisational Structure of AFBI **Action**

11.1 Terms of Reference (TOR) for Organisational Review of AFBI

The Executive presented the draft TOR for an Organisational Review of AFBI and highlighted the key contract objectives.

In response to a query from the Board the Executive confirmed that the procurement and funding of external consultancy will be undertaken by the Strategic Investment Board (SIB) and that AFBI did not therefore have to seek Ministerial approval. The Chair indicated that, at the recent AFBI performance review, the DARD Minister had been supportive of the need to carry out a review of AFBI.

The Executive informed the Board that the draft TOR had been submitted to DARD for comment. The Board also agreed to review the document and provide comments or amendments to the Executive prior to the April Board meeting.

**Board
Members**

12. Strategic Item

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

The Executive presented the updated AFBI Business Plan 2011/12 & AFBI Corporate Plan 2011/12 to 2014/15.

In response, the Board offered a number of suggestions for the Executive to consider.

- Reflect AFBI's high level of customer satisfaction
- Incorporate more references to scientific work
- Increased use of SMART targets

The Board noted that the revised version now contained the financial information following the outcome of the Budget 2010 process. Following further discussion on the budget deficit for 2011/12 the Board considered that the Executive should strengthen the wording around the budgetary pressure and agreed to provide the Executive with an appropriate form of words.

**Board
Members**

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.

13. Any Other Business **Action**

13.1 Rolling Database of Issues Raised at Board Meetings

The Secretary was requested to remove the Pensions Issue from the Rolling Database and mark as “Complete”.

Sec

13.2 Open Meeting

Following discussion it was agreed that the Open Board Meeting should be scheduled for June 2011, subject to the completion of the 2009/10 Accounts and the subsequent finalisation of the AFBI Annual Report.

The Board also suggested advertising the Open Meeting at the Balmoral Show as well as trying to frame presentations based on key themes and activities identified at the show.

13.3 Board Sub-Committees

The Board confirmed that it had received a copy of the proposed new memberships of the AFBI Board Sub-Committees for 2011/12.

14. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the AFBI Board is due to be held on Wednesday 20 April 2011 at AFBI Crossnacreevy.

Presentation

Following the conclusion of Board business, Dr Stanley McDowell gave a presentation on the TB Biosecurity work being carried out at AFBI Stormont by Bacteriology Branch.

The Board thanked Dr McDowell for his informative presentation.

Signed: _____
(Chairperson)

Date: _____