



**Minutes of the Meeting of the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute
(AFBI) Board held at AFBI Hillsborough
on Wednesday 26 October 2011 at 9.30am**

Present – Board Members

Mr Sean Hogan, Chair
Prof David McDowell, D/Chair
Mr Trevor Hinds
Mr Seamus McCaffrey
Mr Bob McCann
Mrs Hilary McCartan
Prof Stewart McNulty
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)
Prof John Davis, DCEO (Acting)
Mr Joel Ferguson, Head of Corporate Services Division (Acting)
Mrs Lynsey Alexander, Head of AFBI Finance (Acting)
Mr Stephen Cousins, AFBI Secretariat

1. Welcome and Introduction

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The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed all present. The Chair reminded Board members that the AFBI Open Meeting would follow the conclusion of business therefore given the limited timeframe available it was agreed that any matters requiring a more detailed discussion would be carried forward to the next Board meeting in November.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received on behalf of Prof Grace Mulcahy, Mr James Noble and Mr Alan McKeown. The Executive also submitted apologies on behalf of Mr Paul Brennan, Head of AFBI HR and Mr Venkat Deshpande, Head of AFBI Finance.

3. Conflict of Interests Declaration

There were no conflicts of interest declared.

4. Draft Minutes of the Previous Board Meeting held on 29 September 2011

On a proposal from Mr Trevor Hinds, seconded by Mr John Rankin the Board approved the draft minutes from the previous Board meeting held on 29 September 2011 without amendment.

5. Matters Arising/Action Points from Previous AFBI Board Meeting held on 29 September 2011**5.1 Item 5.1 - Review of AFBI's Commercial Terms and Conditions**

The Executive presented a paper headed Non-Solicitation and Protection of AFBI Intellectual Property, to the AFBI Board for noting.

The Executive advised the Board that it was in the process of developing a policy in support of this issue and this will be presented to the AFBI Board for approval at either the November or December Board meeting.

Exec

The AFBI Board signified that it was content to move forward on this basis.

5.2 Item 5.2 – AFBI Vision and Mission Statement

The Board stated that it was content for photographs of serving Board members to be displayed at the various AFBI locations and the Executive agreed that it would make the necessary arrangements.

Exec**5.3 Item 8.1.2 – AFBI Risk Management Strategy**

The Executive advised that this matter would be included on the agenda for the AFBI Board meeting in November.

Sec**5.4 Item 9.4 – AFBI Starters and Leavers Report**

The Executive informed the AFBI Board that it will present a more detailed paper in time for the next AFBI Board meeting in November.

Exec**5.5 Item 10.2 – AFBI Monthly Cash Flow Report**

The Executive advised the Board that the issues relating to the delay in AFBI receiving payments from the Grant-in-Aid (GiA) had been raised with AFBI Sponsor Branch and they have agreed to investigate the matter further.

Meantime, AFBI have also inquired about the possibility of making future GiA payments via bank transfer as this arrangement would eliminate the current difficulties.

The Executive agreed to keep the Board informed of progress.

Exec**5.6 Item 12 – Organisational Review of AFBI**

The Executive advised that a draft Project Initiation Document (PID) incorporating the comments of the Project Steering Group has been received from KPMG and a copy has now been sent to Trade Union Side for its consideration.

The Executive advised that it would forward a final version of the PID to Board members as soon as it becomes available.

6. Chairman's Business

The Chair advised the Board that all of the issues that he wished to mention were covered under the CEO's report and that he had nothing further to add.

7. CEO's Report

The CEO presented his report to the Board and highlighted a number of items for noting.

The CEO also informed the Board that AFBI had received two visits from two of Northern Ireland's Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), - Ms B de Brun (Sinn Fein) and Mrs D Dodds (Democratic Unionist Party). Both of these meetings had been very constructive.

The Board were content to note the CEO's report which it found to be very encouraging.

8. Governance Issues

8.1 Risk Management

8.1.1 *AFBI Corporate Risk Register – New or Emerging Risks*

The Executive made the Board aware of an emerging risk to the organisation that centred on AFBI's current financial situation.

Following initial discussion the Board agreed that the matter required a more in depth discussion and asked the Executive to ensure that the matter is placed on the agenda for the next Board meeting in November.

Sec

In further discussion the Board noted and questioned the proposed change of funding from capital to resource and suggested that the Executive may wish to consider retaining some of its capital allocation.

Exec

8.2 Whistleblowing and Fraud

There were no reports of any new or ongoing cases of whistleblowing or fraud to report.

8.3 Health and Safety

As part of the Divisional Report from Veterinary Sciences Division, the Executive informed the Board of an incident that had occurred during the refurbishment work being carried out on the Contingency Laboratory at

AFBI Stormont when a section of the ceiling had collapsed. The building was unoccupied at the time. **Action**

An investigation is ongoing to identify the cause of this unexpected event and remedial work will be undertaken urgently.

The Executive assured the Board that it would receive a full report of the findings from the investigation following its completion. **Exec**

9. Finance

9.1 Monthly Budget Monitoring Report

The Executive presented the Board with the Monthly Budget Monitoring Report for the period ending 30 September 2011.

Commenting on the report, the Executive advised the Board that the figures now include details on accruals and that the income figures are based on information received from the various AFBI Divisions.

The Board were content to note.

9.2 Cash Flow Report

The Board were also presented with a copy of the AFBI Cash Flow Report detailing the position as at 1 October 2011.

The Board were content to note subject to a suggestion that the Executive make a clear distinction between actual and forecasted figures. **Exec**

10. AFBI Business Plan 2011/12 – Progress On Objectives for Quarter Ending 30 Sept 11

An update on the progress being made against the targets set in the 2011/12 AFBI Business Plan was presented to the Board for noting.

In the discussion that followed the Board focused on a number of targets.

In response to a query from the Board, the Executive stated that the introduction of *Profit and Loss Accounts* will involve a substantial piece of work that is likely to require additional resources but this will be examined in more detail as soon as the January monitoring round bids have been finalised.

The Executive also confirmed that work on a Strategic Cost Model (SCM) is also underway but this will also involve a substantial amount of work and it is unlikely that the costings for the 2012/13 work programme will be based on a new SCM.

The Board also referred to AFBI's target of achieving unqualified accounts for 2010/11 by 31 September 2011. Following discussion the Executive **Exec**

accepted that this target had not been achieved due to the decision to include actual figures on the historical VAT position rather than to include an estimate. It was agreed that this should be colour coded red to reflect

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this position even though there was no statutory date for completion of the accounts.

The Board and the Executive also agreed that it was very important that the target of reviewing the overhead allocations by 30 June 2011 was completed with a degree of urgency and the Executive should do all in its power to ensure this is the case.

Exec

11. Organisational Review of AFBI

Further to the earlier report given by the Executive during today's meeting (Item 5.6 - Matters Arising), the Executive also informed the Board that KPMG had met with members of the AFBI Senior Management Team (SMT).

The Executive reaffirmed that the next stage in the project is to have the Project Initiation Document completed and circulated to the Board.

12. Joint DARD/AFBI Board Meeting

The Chair informed the Board that he along with the CEO, the Deputy Chair and a number of AFBI Board members (Mr Hinds and Mr McCann) had been invited to attend a meeting of the DARD Departmental Board on Monday 7 November 2011 in AFBI HQ, Newforge Lane.

The Chair advised the Board that the CEO would be making a presentation on AFBI Finances and that he would be making a presentation on the strategic direction of the Organisation.

The Chair also reminded the Board that the meeting with the DARD DB had come about as a direct result of a recommendation arising from the Board Effectiveness Review conducted in 2009.

13. DARD Estates Strategy Consultation

The Executive presented the Board with a draft response to the DARD Estate Management Strategy Consultation which has a closing date of Monday 7 November 2011.

Following a short discussion the Board signified that it was content for the Executive to submit the paper on the Board's behalf subject to minor amendment.

Exec

14. Reports from Divisions

The Executive presented reports from each of the AFBI Divisions and highlighted a number of key points for the benefit of Board members.

In response the Board were pleased to note the ongoing work within the various Divisions and agreed that the Chair should formally acknowledge the success of those within Applied Plant Science and Biometrics Division who

are engaged in the PiGIS project that has recently won the prestigious Oxford Farming Conference/Royal Agricultural Society of England “*Practice with Science*” Award.

15. AFBI Open Meeting – Agenda

A copy of the agenda for the AFBI Open Meeting was provided by the Executive and the Board were content to note.

16. Any Other Business

16.1 Rolling Database of Issues Raised at Previous Board Meetings

The Board noted the updates to the Rolling Database made following the previous Board meeting held in September 2011.

17. Date of Next Meeting

The next AFBI Board meeting will be held on Wednesday 23 November 2011.

Signed: _____
(Chairperson)

Date: _____