



**Minutes of the Meeting of the
Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) Board
held at AFBI Newforge
on Thursday 21 September 2017 at 9.30am**

Present – Board Members

Mr Colm McKenna, Chair	Dr Michelle Costello-Smith	Ms Joan Houston
Prof William McKelvey, Deputy Chair	Ms Theresa Cullen	Mrs Maureen McKeague
Mr Ian Buchanan	Mrs Fiona Hanna	Mrs Sharon Smyth
Mr Colin Coffey	Dr Richard Horton	Mr Richard Solomon

In Attendance - AFBI Executive

Dr Sinclair Mayne, Chief Executive Officer
Dr Stanley McDowell, Director of Veterinary Sciences Division
Dr Elizabeth Magowan, Director of Sustainable Agri-Food Sciences Division
Mrs Josephine Kelly, Director of Finance and Corporate Affairs Division

Mr James Adams, AFBI Secretariat

AFBI Boardroom Apprentice

Miss Jennifer Ritchie

- 1. Welcome and Introduction** **ACTION**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, in particular Miss Jennifer Ritchie who was attending her first Board meeting after her successful application to the Boardroom Apprentice Scheme.
- 2. Apologies**

There were no apologies to record.
- 3. Conflict of Interests/Register of Interests Declaration**

There were no conflicts of interest to be recorded.
- 4. Draft Minutes of the AFBI Board Meeting held on 16 May 2017**

The draft minutes from the AFBI Board meeting held on 16 May 2017 were approved as an accurate reflection of the business conducted at the meeting.
- 4.1 Action Sheet from AFBI Board Meeting held on 16 May 2017**

The Board noted the progress against actions as per the action sheet.

5. Chair's Remarks

ACTION

The Chair reported on the recent Joint DAERA/AFBI Board meeting, the in-year financial position of AFBI and the positive feedback on the AFBI Agricultural and Food Economics Branch report on the impacts of trade agreements on UK Agriculture as the UK prepares to exit the EU.

In updating the Board on his public appointments, the Chair informed members that he had stood down as a Board Member of the NI Courts and Tribunals Service and has been appointed a Non-Executive Director and Chair of the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee for the Department for the Economy.

The Chair also informed members of the ongoing recruitment competition for the Deputy Chair position on the AFBI Board and it was noted that correspondence should have been issued to individual Board members to alert them to the competition.

6. Executive Report

In presenting his Executive Report for the period 1 May – 18 September 2017, the CEO highlighted a number of items which included the following:-

- The CEO confirmed that AFBI is now the preferred scientific provider for a major UK supermarket chain. Dr Magowan and the CEO had a meeting with their Agriculture Team and a dedicated project manager will be appointed to report under Dr Magowan;
- A number of branches have been successful in obtaining DAERA funded PhD studentships due to commence in October, 2017;
- AFBI acted as host institute for the 2017 European Association of Fish Pathology Conference held in the Waterfront Conference Centre 4-8 September, 2017;
- The Interreg VA Catchment Care project has been approved for funding by SEUPB. The project will aim to restore three cross border catchments to good water quality over the next five years and will be a multi branch project involving a range of AFBI representatives;
- Chemical & Immunodiagnostic Sciences Branch has been heavily involved in the UK response to the fipronil in egg crisis. The Branch developed and validated a test method within days of the issue breaking and this has been used to test NI eggs; all of which have been clear.
- Fisheries & Aquatic Ecosystems Branch is in negotiation with NI Water to enter into a service level agreement to provide science support to the Living with Water Programme;
- AFBI held three off-site Dairy Farm Roadshows in Banbridge, Enniskillen and Newtownstewart. The events reached a wide audience and received very positive feedback from industry;
- The AFBI Estate Strategy Group will meet shortly and the CEO commented on a number of AFBI Estate related matters.

The CEO also highlighted a number of future events including the World Dairy Summit, the George Scott Robinson Memorial Lecture and the 2nd AFBI Science Outlook Conference.

Board members also commented on the excellent coverage of AFBI in a recent episode of the BBC programme 'Home Ground' and asked that congratulations be passed to Dr Lisa Black and her colleagues.

**ACTION
Exec**

7. Progress Report on DAERA Review of AFBI 2017/18

The CEO informed the Board of delays in relation to the ongoing DAERA Review of AFBI which may impact on the completion date of the review. The AFBI team continues to work hard to provide the extensive information requests and online questionnaires have now been developed for AFBI stakeholders which will be issued in due course.

The Board also noted that the Department of Finance's Business Consultancy Service had been asked to undertake two elements of the review, namely AFBI's Funding Model and Board Effectiveness.

The Board sought clarification on how the DAERA Review of AFBI interacts with the DAERA Science Transformation Programme and it was noted that a presentation is due to be given to the Review Group in November 2017. In the meantime the Chair suggested that he will seek an update from the DAERA Permanent Secretary.

Chair

8. Industry Engagement

The CEO presented a paper with outline proposals on the establishment of an AFBI Industry Advisory Group. The Board welcomed the paper and the opportunity to increase engagement with industry representatives. In discussing the proposed membership which will be appointed in a 2-3 year cycle, the Board was keen that the Executive seek a representative from the environmental sector to sit on the Group.

9. Finance

9.1 AFBI Budget Monitor Report – Position at July 2017

In presenting the "*AFBI Budget Monitor Report - Position as at July 2017*", Mrs Kelly advised the Board that the 2017/18 year end position, subject to a number of assumptions, is projected to be a surplus. The Board was also informed of the Executive's wish to extend this year's capital investment in equipment by a further £1,048k and approval is being sought from DAERA to proceed. Project leads have been informed of this action and have been asked to complete business cases for these additional assets.

While scrutinising the figures the Board noted that delays in the recruitment of staff had not had a material impact on income forecasts.

9.2 Vaccine Royalties Update

It was noted that there had been no change in projected royalties from vaccines at this stage.

9.3 Quarterly update on new bids and contracts

ACTION

The Board noted the quarterly report on new bids and contracts and commented on the excellent year to date conversion rate for new business. In response to a query on AFBI's capacity to undertake the additional work, the Executive advised that it is confident that they can fulfil current commitments.

The CEO acknowledged that Branches have to balance preparation of bids with ongoing work, and while the level of activity varies within branches, it is important that Branches remain both ambitious and mindful of AFBI's Science Strategy.

10. **Finance and Business Strategy Committee**

10.1 Minutes from Finance and Business Strategy Committee Meeting held on 5 May 2017

The Board noted the minutes from the Finance and Business Strategy Committee meeting held on 5 May 2017.

10.2 Report and Draft Minutes from Finance and Business Strategy Committee meeting held on 25 August 2017

The Board noted the draft minutes from the Finance and Business Strategy Committee meeting held on 25 August 2017.

Mr Coffey also reported on a number of matters discussed at the meeting and also highlighted the benefits of the membership crossover between the Finance and Business Strategy and Science Strategy Committees.

11. **Audit & Risk Assurance Committee**

11.1 Minutes from Audit & Risk Assurance Committee Meeting held on 4 May 2017

The Board noted the minutes from the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee meeting held on 4 May 2017.

11.2 Report and Draft Minutes from Audit & Risk Assurance Committee Meeting held on 28 June 2017

The Board noted the draft minutes from the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee meeting held on 28 June 2017.

12. **Organisational Development & Human Resources Committee**

12.1 Report and Minutes from Organisational Development & Human Resources Committee Meeting held on 23 May 2017

The Board noted the minutes from the Organisational Development & Human Resources Committee Meeting held on 23 May 2017.

12.2 Report from Organisational Development & Human Resources Committee Meeting held on 11 September 2017 **ACTION**

Ms Cullen provided the Board with a verbal update on proceedings at the Organisational Development & Human Resources Committee Meeting held on 11 September 2017. Topics highlighted included ongoing efforts to address recommendations from the Internal Audit Review of HR, organisational change at senior levels, absence management and training programmes.

Ms Cullen also touched on the subject of organisational culture within AFBI and the need for a thorough discussion at Board level. Members were in agreement that this subject warranted further time and agreed that the subject would form a major part of the agenda for the October AFBI Strategy Workshop.

Sec

13. Science Strategy Committee

13.1 Report and Minutes from Science Strategy Committee meeting held on 2 June 2017

The Board noted the minutes from the Science Strategy Committee Meeting held on 2 June 2017.

13.2 Report and Draft Minutes from Science Strategy Committee Meeting held on 23 August 2017

The Board noted the draft minutes from the Science Strategy Committee Meeting held on 23 August 2017.

Dr Costello-Smith highlighted that the Committee had held constructive discussions around the structure of the proposed AFBI Science Programmes including the role of programme leads and how best to maximise the benefits of adopting a matrix management approach.

13.3 Update on AFBI Science Programme Re-Organisation

Dr Magowan presented a succinct paper which outlines the three AFBI Science Programmes, details how the programmes will interconnect and suggested next steps towards adoption.

During the discussion that followed the Board was very supportive of the vision presented and the desire for AFBI to evolve into a more science programme-based organisation. In terms of the practicalities and being mindful of the significant amount of change within AFBI in recent years, the Board welcomed the development of a roadmap and in sharing their experiences of change management, was supportive of a structure that could meet both the operational and professional needs of AFBI.

14. Governance Issues**14.1 Risk Management****14.1.1 *Reports of New or Emerging Risks***

There were no new or emerging risks reported.

14.1.2 *Draft AFBI Corporate Risk Register (CRR) (June 2017)*

The Board approved the draft CRR dated June 2017.

In noting the continual management of risk by the Executive and that a draft CRR is presented to the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee on a quarterly basis, the Board was content to discuss the subject of risk on an annual basis, on the proviso that significant changes to the CRR are recorded in the minutes of the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee.

14.2 Whistleblowing and Fraud**14.2.1 *Reports of New or Ongoing Cases***

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

14.3 Health & Safety**14.3.1 *Reports of New or Emerging Issues***

There were no new or emerging cases reported.

14.3.2 Health and Safety Review Update

The Board noted that the Health and Safety Review remains ongoing with a draft report planned to be presented to the Executive in October 2017. The Executive also advised that a Dangerous Goods Safety Advisor had been undertaking a review within AFBI and the report is likely to contain recommendations for further action.

15. Video Presentation – Information Commissioner, General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

Attendees viewed the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) video on the implementation of the EU GDPR which are due to come into force on 18 May 2018.

16. AFBI Policies/Strategies**16.1 Draft AFBI Appeal Policy**

The Board approved the draft AFBI Appeal Policy. Mrs Kelly informed the Board that the Executive will be seeking Board volunteers for appropriate training.

Exec

17. Annual Review of AFBI Standing Orders & Schedule of Matters Reserved to the Board and Scheme of Delegation **ACTION**

Subject to clarification on a few minor points, the Board approved the revised 'AFBI Standing Orders & Schedule of Matters Reserved to the Board and Scheme of Delegation'. The Board also noted that the change in delegated limits regarding the disposal of obsolete / surplus equipment will be reflected in the revised Management Statement & Financial Memorandum which is currently under review by DAERA.

18. AFBI Board Annual Governance

18.1 Summary Report on AFBI Board Members Appraisals 2016/17

The Board noted the Summary report on AFBI Board members Appraisals for 2016/17.

19. AFBI Business Plan 2017/18

19.1 Update on Progress Against KPIs 2017/18 (Quarter 1)

EMT noted the progress against the AFBI Corporate KPIs as at 30 June 2017. In presenting future reports the Board requested more detail be provided on what mitigating actions are being undertaken to achieve KPIs that have been attributed with an 'Amber' or 'Red' status.

Exec

20. Draft AFBI Corporate Plan 2017/18 – 2020/21

The Executive presented the Board with a first draft of the AFBI Corporate Plan 2017/18 – 2020/21. Following a detailed discussion in which Board members provided valuable feedback on the content and layout of the document, it was agreed that the Executive would present a revised version at the October AFBI Board Strategy Workshop.

Exec

21. Any Other Business

22. Review of Board Meeting Effectiveness

The Board considered that it had held an effective meeting.

23. Date of Next AFBI Board Strategy Workshop and AFBI Board Meeting

The next AFBI Board Strategy Workshop will be held on Thursday 19 October 2017 at Kilkeel.

The next AFBI Board Meeting will be held on Monday 11 December 2017 at Catalyst INC.

Signed: _____
(Chairperson)

Date: _____