



**Minutes of the Meeting of the
Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) Board Strategy Workshop
held at Kilmorey Arms Hotel, Kilkeel
on Thursday 19 October 2017 at 9.30am**

Present – Board Members

Mr Colm McKenna, Chair
Mr Colin Coffey
Dr Michelle Costello-Smith
Ms Theresa Cullen
Mrs Fiona Hanna

Dr Richard Horton
Ms Joan Houston
Mrs Maureen McKeague
Mrs Sharon Smyth
Mr Richard Solomon

In Attendance - AFBI Executive

Mrs Josephine Kelly, Director of Finance and Corporate Affairs Division
Dr Stanley McDowell, Director of Veterinary Sciences Division
Dr Elizabeth Magowan, Director of Sustainable Agri-Food Sciences Division
Mrs Fiona Campbell, Head of Human Resources
Mr Glenn Montgomery, Head of Governance & Performance
Mr James Adams, AFBI Secretariat

1. Welcome and Introduction

ACTION

The Chair welcomed everyone to the AFBI Board Strategy Workshop.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received on behalf of Prof William McKelvey, Deputy Chair, Mr Ian Buchanan, Board Member and Dr Sinclair Mayne, CEO.

3. Conflict of Interests/Register of Interests Declaration

There were no conflicts of interest to be recorded.

4. Draft Minutes of AFBI Board Strategy Workshop held 29 June 2017

The draft minutes from the AFBI Board Strategy Workshop held on 29 June 2017 were approved as an accurate reflection of the business conducted at the meeting.

5. Action Sheet from AFBI Board Strategy Workshop held on 29 June 2017

The Board noted the progress against actions as per the action sheet, subject to the following:

The Chair informed the Board that as part of the DAERA Review of AFBI 2017-18 he had reviewed the proposal for the section entitled '*Review of Board Effectiveness*' and was largely content. Agreement has been reached that a copy of the draft report will be provided to the AFBI Board for a factual accuracy check.

The Chair noted that the Stakeholder questionnaire in relation to the ongoing review will remain open until the end of October 2017 and, while it may initially be focused on responses from those who use AFBI services, he encouraged all Board members to complete. The Chair also asked Board members to fully engage in networking to help ensure the fullest and broadest spectrum of stakeholders provide feedback on the industry's view of AFBI.

6. **Review of AFBI Corporate Plan 2018-2022**

The Executive commenced the Board Strategy Workshop with a presentation relating to the AFBI Corporate Plan 2018-2022. Mrs Kelly summarised the objectives for the session and set the context in relation to a number of wider government initiatives.

In discussing the desired outcomes for Industry, Society and AFBI, a number of points were noted including the following:-

- Opportunity to add value and improve the efficiency of the supply chain as well as support improvements in products and productivity were seen as some of the key outcomes for the industry;
- Ensuring the entire supply chain is profitable and competing on a global scale are seen as key to protecting international investment in the local Agri-Food industry;
- Maintaining high skills and reputation will be key to sustaining and increasing market share for industry;
- Food quality, consumer trust, food security, sustained employment and addressing environmental issues such as air quality, water quality and reduction in wastage were seen as key outcomes for society;
- Attraction of top class scientists, high impact peer review publications, increased reputation, raising of the AFBI profile and having a fit for purpose infrastructure were seen as some of the key outcomes for AFBI.

Mr Montgomery then outlined AFBI's Strategic Goals which had been agreed through facilitated workshops for inclusion in the AFBI Business Plan 2017/18. While noting that AFBI goals need to show a clear alignment with the strategic goals of the Sponsor Department, the Board was asked to consider if they were still content with the goals in their current form for the period 2018-2022.

In debating the language and context of AFBI's Strategic Goals 2018-22 the following suggestions were noted:-

- A degree of flexibility should be considered within the goals due to the potential for significant change during the period in question;

- Language should be inspiring but also convey that AFBI needs to be focused on key areas; **ACTION**
- The strategic goals should encapsulate the need for AFBI to drive innovation, influence policy and impact on the Agri-food industry;
- Wording should be proofed by subjecting them to the What, Why, Who, When and Where questions.

At the conclusion of the discussion Dr Magowan provided a hypothesis on how she sees measures being built into the strategic goals in the form of objectives and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). It was agreed that the Executive would provide the Board with a further iteration of the Corporate Plan for their consideration via correspondence. **Exec**

The Chair requested that the Executive be bold in its assertions and ensure that goals and objectives are challenging. If deemed necessary, the Chair also stated that he may call an extraordinary Board meeting to discuss the Corporate Plan in order to ensure that Board views are fully encapsulated and the document is provided to DAERA within the agreed timeframe.

7. Achieving Cultural Change in AFBI

The Board and Executive commenced the second discussion session on the topic of organisational culture. There was a consensus that in order for AFBI's proposed science programmes to fully evolve and the viability of a matrix management approach to be fully realised, there is a need to embrace a culture of change within AFBI.

A first step in the process is to understand and assess the current culture and Mrs Kelly outlined the steps to be undertaken in order to achieve this with the launch of the staff engagement survey, which will provide the Executive with useful benchmarking information for future engagement. Further feedback from staff will also be sought from a variety of forums.

The Executive will then assess the strengths and weaknesses of the current culture before determining what they felt the culture should look like and how it could be implemented effectively.

During a discussion on culture and a number of related matters the following points were noted:-

- Successful culture must be set from the top through strong leadership;
- AFBI should encourage innovation and a balanced approach to public and commercial work;
- A '*will to win*' and '*permission to fail*' culture should be fostered so that staff feel confident to try new ventures which may not always be successful but provide valuable lessons for the future;
- Management Training will be an important support mechanism to staff and it was suggested the current mid-management training being rolled out should incorporate a level of financial training;
- Developing the right structure will be important to facilitating the growth of the right culture;

- There are a number of models in relation to Matrix Management and with a number of Board members having both positive and negative experience of Matrix Management, it should not be undertaken lightly;
- Dr Magowan was asked to present an organogram to the forthcoming meeting of the Science Strategy Committee on 2 November 2017 to facilitate a discussion around organisational structure and the vision for the AFBI Scientific Programmes;
- The Board raised concern around the level of change and the timeframe involved and suggested that a dedicated resource may be required to support the changes and enable them to be realised.

ACTION

EM

In concluding the discussion session, the Chair welcomed the input from Board members and recognised the work undertaken by the Executive to date and the progress that has been made. On the foot of the discussions, the Executive agreed to develop two '*Roadmaps*' one regarding Organisational Culture and one on Organisational Structure. These will be presented to the Board in due course.

Exec

8. Any Other Business

There were no additional items of business.

9. Date of Next AFBI Board Meeting & AFBI Board Workshop

The next AFBI Board meeting will be held on Monday 11 December 2017 at 10.00am in Catalyst Inc, The Innovation Centre, Queen's Road, Belfast.

The next AFBI Board Workshop will be held on Thursday 8 February 2018. The venue is to be confirmed.

Tour of Kilkeel Harbour with Mr Alan McCulla, CEO Anglo-North Irish Fish Producers Organisation (ANIFPO)

At the conclusion of the meeting Mr Alan McCulla, CEO Anglo-North Irish Fish Producers Organisation (ANIFPO), accompanied by Dr Mathieu Lundy, AFBI Fisheries and Aquatic Ecosystems Branch, provided Board members with a tour of the Kilkeel Harbour. The itinerary included a visit to the Kilkeel Seafoods factory followed by two presentations at the ANIFPO offices on 'Sea Source' and a 'NI Selection Gear Development Project'.

Signed: _____
(Chairperson)

Date: _____