



**Minutes of the Meeting of the
Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) Board Strategy Workshop
held at AFBI Newforge
on Tuesday 25 April 2017 at 10.00am**

Present – Board Members

Mr Colm McKenna, 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
Dr Michelle Costello-Smith	Ms Joan Houston	

In Attendance - AFBI Executive

Dr Sinclair Mayne, Chief Executive Officer
Ms Lesley Johnston, (Acting) Director of Finance and Corporate Affairs Division
Dr Stanley McDowell, Director of Veterinary Sciences Division
Dr Elizabeth Magowan, Sustainable Agri-Food Sciences Division
Mr Glenn Montgomery, Head of Governance and performance

Mr James Adams, AFBI Secretariat

Visitors

Dr Alistair Carson, Departmental Scientific Advisor and Director of Science Evidence and Innovation Policy (DAERA)
Mrs Lisa-Jane McIlveen, Business Change Manager (DAERA)

Facilitators

Ms Terry Denny, OPES Managing Director
Ms Paula McBrien, OPES Senior Consultant

1. Welcome and Introduction

ACTION

The Chair welcomed everyone to the first in a series of AFBI Board Strategy Workshops to be held during the coming year. In particular, the Chair offered a warm welcome to the visitors from DAERA, Dr Alistair Carson and Mrs Lisa-Jane McIlveen, and the facilitators Ms Terry Denny and Ms Paula McBrien. The Chair also extended a warm welcome to Dr Elizabeth Magowan who was attending her first meeting with the Board prior to her appointment as the Director of Sustainable Agri-Food Sciences Division on 1 May 2017. The Board congratulated Dr Magowan on her recent appointment.

The Chair outlined the main programme for today which will commence with a presentation by Dr Carson and Mrs McIlveen followed by two facilitated sessions on working with the university sector and the AFBI corporate planning process.

2. Apologies

ACTION

An apology was received on behalf of the Deputy Chair, Prof William McKelvey.

3. Conflict of Interests/Register of Interests Declaration

There were no conflicts of interest to be recorded.

4. Presentation on the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) Science Transformation Programme

Dr Carson commenced the informal presentation with an introduction into his role within DAERA and the rationale for the creation of the new Business Change Manager role which will be undertaken by Mrs McIlveen. The establishment of the DAERA Science Transformation Programme (DSTP) brings together the wider range of DAERA's scientific requirements such as the need to review R&D priorities, evidence and surveillance needs and undertake a review of AFBI. As science informs, monitors and evaluates the vast majority of DAERA activities, it is envisaged that the DSTP will put science at the forefront to aid the achievement of DAERA's strategic outcomes.

A scoping study is currently being undertaken as part of the 2020 DAERA change agenda and DAERA envisage that there are new opportunities for greater synergies in its scientific provision. The DSTP has a broader scope, is specialist in nature and has a longer time frame. The CEO commented that the involvement of CAFRE and the university sector is fundamental to ensuring a joined up approach between R&D, education and knowledge transfer and in response, Dr Carson advised that the views of such stakeholders will be captured through representation on the relevant steering groups.

Dr Carson highlighted the significant proposed capital investment into the AFBI Estate to ensure that the Institute is at the leading edge of scientific programmes and it was noted that integration of the estate into the change management programme will be an important element of the process. In discussing the proposed investment for the AFBI Estate and in particular at the AFBI Stormont site, Dr Carson advised that the Veterinary Science Division (VSD) Outline Business Case (OBC) had been approved and that DAERA are keen to establish the Programme Board. While there had been some delay in providing AFBI with the plans for the Programme Board, it was noted that AFBI will respond to the proposals in a timely manner.

The CEO welcomed the high level review and highlighted that science should remain separate from policy development which he sees as a fundamental principle. The Board raised some concerns around the prolonged timeframe for the DSTP and the need to keep stakeholders informed. In response, Dr Carson assured the Board that a number of key milestones are in place and the Department is looking to undertake these at pace. This will include the scoping review, analysis of the R&D commissioning process and the review of AFBI. It was also recognised that open and transparent communications around the change management process will be key to delivering the DSTP. Dr Carson also reiterated the recognition of the role of science and assured the Board that there were no pre-ordained outcomes.

Mrs McIlveen took the Board through a diagram detailing the structure that the DSTP will take. In discussing the elements within the DSTP a number of points were noted, including the following:-

- Information gathering for the mapping out of the current provision is ongoing with Mrs McIlveen in post as the project manager. The CEO stated that AFBI would be keen to offer their perspective on this and Mrs McIlveen agreed to take the suggestion back to the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) of the 'Identifying Needs' work stream;
- Horizon scanning around longer-term R&D needs is at the policy development stage. The Chair indicated that AFBI would be keen to feed into this process at the appropriate time and highlighted the view that policy developers should meet with front line staff when undertaking the horizon scanning exercise;
- In terms of commissioning R&D to meet customer needs and developing international collaborations with other funders, this is at an early stage. The primary focus of DAERA will be with other government funders although it was recognised that AFBI has the additional freedoms to pursue other funding;
- In terms of the Value for Money aspect of the programme, the CEO suggested that a holistic approach would be more beneficial than narrowing the focus to information at a unit cost level;
- The Chair suggested that the 'NI Science Strategy Group' would be enhanced by representation from the industry, health and food standards sectors;
- In terms of the science platforms, the Project Sponsor for VSD-OBC will be offered to AFBI;
- A number of bespoke pieces of work need to be undertaken and the Board was assured that these will not be affected or delayed by the ongoing process to appoint the Programme SRO;
- The DAERA Science Strategy is expected to take two years to complete and will be outcome focused in line with the Programme for Government; in the interim AFBI is content that it has a firm understanding of key priorities of the Agri-food sector.

In concluding the presentation Dr Carson outlined the next steps of the process that will involve further communications between the stakeholders, establishing key governance groups, appointing staff and developing governance documentation and a business case. The Chair thanked Dr Carson and Mrs McIlveen for their presentation on such an important topic which had allowed for good strategic discussion at the workshop. The Chair also reemphasised that the Board and Executive are keen to fully participate in the process and look forward to engaging with the Department at all appropriate levels.

Dr Carson and Mrs McIlveen left the meeting

5. Presentation on AFBI-University Alliance

Ms Denny commenced the first facilitated session by providing an introduction to the work of OPES and a brief background of her experience in providing assessment and coaching across a wide range of sectors. The CEO then set the scene and outlined the case for the creation of a formal alliance with the local university sector including the underlying rationale to formalise working relationships.

Ms McBrien then asked individuals to note their initial thoughts prior to the workshop breaking into small groups to raise questions and discuss the key points around a closer alliance with the university sector. Each group presented their findings in turn so that key themes could be formulated and brought to the fore.

After a thorough discussion on the practicalities and governance arrangements and how to maximise benefits for AFBI, the university sector and the agri-food industry, the Board was content to recommend exploring the formation of a formal alliance with a local university. Should the proposal be accepted by the Board of the local university, further meetings will be arranged to discuss the feasible next steps. The CEO also agreed to keep the Board informed of any feedback received from the university.

Exec

6. Update on AFBI Corporate Plan 2017/18 to 2021/22

The CEO gave a presentation to the Board on the Corporate Planning Process for the development of the AFBI Corporate Plan 2017/18 to 2021/22.

The Executive and Heads of Branch attended a facilitated Corporate Planning Workshop on 31 March 2017. Using management analysis tools such as PESTLE (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environment) and SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) the workshop considered the major issues that may affect or influence AFBI's performance and ability to deliver AFBI's Vision, Mission and four core goals over the corporate planning period.

Another key output from the workshop was the establishment of the following three work streams:

- Programmes;
- People;
- Support and Management.

The CEO will have ownership of the work stream process with each work stream headed by an Executive Sponsor and supported by a project leader and a project team. The work is expected to be concluded by July 2017 with draft recommendations and plans produced by August 2017.

The 'Programmes' work stream will focus on the six key areas of science and ensure AFBI takes ownership of a co-ordinated and focused cross-cutting programme based approach. In response to a query on the measurement of the success of programmes, the CEO informed the Board that this will be through outputs which are focused in terms of scientific and industry impact. The CEO also stated that the determination of programmes may create pressure between servicing industry needs and generating additional non-Grant-in-Aid revenue and it will be vital that AFBI manages this situation closely. The Board welcomed the strategic focus of the work stream.

The 'People' work stream will focus on the development of succession planning to ensure that AFBI has the ability to maintain and attract the right skills. The Board enquired as to whether this work stream would involve a review of staff Terms and Conditions. In response, the Executive stated that such a review

would not form part of this work stream and taking account of the undertakings around the DSTP, it was deemed not appropriate to undertake a review at this time.

ACTION

The 'Support and Management' work stream will focus on the additional work to be undertaken by the FCAD Division which is over and above the normal day to day work, such as the development of a charging policy and the set-up and operation of the Directed Research Fund. Given the additional funding provided by DAERA for 2017/18 to support the development of these bespoke projects, the CEO advised that Job Descriptions for additional short-term posts are expected to be completed shortly.

In discussing the timetable for the production of the AFBI Corporate Plan 2017/18 to 2021/22 the Chair stated that Board members would be available to offer any assistance which may be required. The CEO also took the opportunity to thank the Board for their input into the Business Planning process and the Chair asked that the AFBI Business Plan 2017/18 be included on the agenda of the AFBI Board meeting to be held on 16 May 2017.

Exec

Ms Denney and Ms O'Brien left the meeting

7. Update on Stakeholder Open Day – 1 June 2017

The CEO presented a paper outlining the purpose and agenda for the forthcoming AFBI Stakeholder Open Day which will take place at AFBI Hillsborough on Thursday 1 June 2017.

The event has been regularly attended by a wide range of stakeholders from Industry, the farming community, DAERA and CAFRE and allows them to gain an insight into the strategic direction of AFBI. This year's event will coincide with World Milk Day and a keynote speaker from the dairy industry is being sought.

In discussing the programme for the day and taking account of the recent AFBI Science Outlook Conference, the Board suggested that it would be very beneficial if the scientific presentations could be complemented with input from customers. It was felt that this would enhance the presentations and clearly demonstrate to the audience how the work of AFBI impacts on the industry and helps deliver benefits to a range of end users. The Executive agreed to take this forward and will consider a reduction in the number of presentations in order to accommodate articulation of the customer point of view.

Exec

8. Any Other Business

There were no additional items of business.

9. Date of Next AFBI Board Meeting

The next AFBI Board meeting will be held on Tuesday 16 May 2017 at 10.00am in AFBI Hillsborough.

The next AFBI Board workshop will be held on Thursday 29 June 2017. The Venue is to be confirmed.

Signed: _____
(Chairperson)

Date: _____