



**Minutes of the Meeting of the
Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) Board
held at AFBI Newforge
on Wednesday 24 October 2018**

Present – Board Members

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

In Attendance - AFBI Executive:

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

Mr Glenn Montgomery, Head of Governance & Performance Branch (Item 7)
Mr Richard McCormick, Head of Corporate Communications (Item 8)

Mr James Adams, AFBI Secretariat

AFBI Board Apprentice

Ms Nuala Kilmartin

1. Chairman's Introduction and Update

ACTION

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received on behalf of AFBI Board members Mrs Roberta Brownlee and Mrs Fiona Hanna.

3. Conflict of Interests/Register of Interests Declaration

There were no conflicts of interest to be recorded.

4. Draft Minutes of the AFBI Board Strategy Workshop held on 18 June 2018

The draft minutes from the AFBI Board Strategy Workshop held on 18 June 2018 were approved as an accurate reflection of the business conducted at the meeting.

5. Action Sheet from AFBI Board Strategy Workshop held on 18 June 2018

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

6. **AFBI Board Business**

6.1 Health & Safety Policy

The following draft sections of the AFBI Health & Safety Policy were presented to the AFBI Board for consideration:-

- Section 1.2 – Roles and Responsibilities
- Section 1.3 – Arrangements
- Section 1.4 – Organisational Structure for Health and Safety

In reviewing the draft sections of the Policy the Board requested a number of amendments including the following:-

- Where appropriate the roles and responsibilities of the Executive should be aligned with those of the Board;
- Organograms should be updated to fully articulate sub-committee / Board reporting structures;
- The Policy should state that the Chair of the overarching AFBI Health & Safety Advisory Group will be the Director of Finance & Corporate Affairs Division.

The Board noted that Health and Safety is a standing item on three of the Board sub-committees with the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) taking the lead in this regard. The ARAC will review its Terms of Reference to ensure clarity in terms of matters to be reported.

JH

In terms of day to day activities, the Executive assured the Board that processes are in place and staff are made fully aware of the procedures to adhere to in terms of accident reporting. Whilst reports will be provided to the ARAC, assurance was provided that exception reporting to the Board forms part of the reporting framework.

The CEO has ultimate responsibility for Health and Safety and in terms of training it was noted that a comprehensive framework is being developed by the Health & Safety Unit in conjunction with AFBI HR. When the process is embedded, the day to day operational aspects will be the dealt with by direct line managers. The Executive advised that additional assurances around 'on the job' training is also provided through ISO accreditation processes.

In concluding the discussions the Board asked that the matters highlighted at today's workshop be incorporated into a revised version of the policy and that it be presented at the AFBI Board Meeting on 12 December 2018.

Exec

6.2 Finance Update

A summary report on the in-year review of the 2018/19 financial position was presented to the Board which highlighted the recent exercise undertaken by the

Executive, the financial movements in the previous month and that a £2.77m operational surplus is currently being projected as the year-end position. The report also outlined communications with the Department on this matter including the status of the DAERA Monitoring rounds.

ACTION

In discussing the underlining reasons that led to this scenario, the Executive explained that delays in the start times of major projects and in the recruitment of key specialist posts had been major contributors to the surplus. Discussions also took place in relation to royalty income from vaccines and it was noted that this forecast is difficult to predict due to numerous complexities and timing issues in relation to the realisation of revenue from vaccines sales which is outside AFBI's control.

The Chair requested that adequate time be allocated for this topic on the Agenda for the AFBI Board Meeting on Wednesday 12 December 2018. A detailed paper will also be provided and the Chair asked that the Executive articulate how this scenario arose, how similar scenarios can be avoided in the future and the implications of the 2018/19 financial position on AFBI going forward.

It was noted that Key Performance Indicators will form part of the discussion at the DAERA/AFBI Accountability meeting on 25 October 2018 and the Board asked that they be provided with the report on the KPI position at 30 September 2018 as soon as possible.

Exec

The Executive also took the opportunity to update the Board on the situation in relation to the publication of the AFBI Annual Report and Accounts 2016/17. The Board noted that AFBI and DAERA are drafting their own communications regarding this and the Chair highlighted the importance of a consistent message.

7. DAERA Science Transformation Programme / DAERA Review of AFBI

The CEO commenced a strategic discussion on the progress of the DAERA Science Transformation Programme (DSTP) and the implementation of the findings from the DAERA Tailored Review of AFBI by highlighting a number of key positive aspects of the DSTP including recognition of the importance of science, the plans for the science estate and the need for a holistic and joined-up approach to science across DAERA and AFBI.

The CEO also provided an overview of the DSTP Plan, pointing out the areas completed and highlighting that the DSTP will now focus on the development of the DAERA Science Strategy to 2030.

In response to a request from Dr Costello-Smith, the CEO agreed to share a Project Initiation Document on the DAERA Science Strategy Framework with the AFBI Science Strategy Committee.

CEO

In welcoming the progress update and the positive aspects of the DSTP, the Chair felt that the opportunity for enhanced stakeholder engagement across the wider government departments, industry and the educational sector had not been maximised to date.

Mr Montgomery continued the presentation with a detailed look at the findings of the DAERA Tailored Review of AFBI. He highlighted the aims of the review and categorisation and ownership of the thirty-six recommendations.

ACTION

Mr Montgomery also informed the Board that a mapping exercise of the fifteen recommendations allocated to AFBI revealed that nine aligned with existing strategic outcomes within the AFBI Corporate Plan 2018-22 and are already being taken forward within the plan period. The recommendations were also collated into the following themes:-

1. Need for Strategic Direction from DAERA / AFBI engagement in setting strategy
2. Optimising relationships with DAERA (Partnership)
3. Optimising relationships with customers / partners
4. Attracting, retaining and developing our People
5. Optimising Estates and Systems

Mr Montgomery demonstrated how AFBI's Strategic Outcomes and the recommendations aligned with these key themes.

In noting that a joint DAERA/AFBI Action Plan is to be developed, overall implementation of the recommendations will be governed and monitored by the DSTP Board and that regular internal reporting will be provided to the Executive and Board, the Chair advised that AFBI must take full ownership in implementing its elements of the action plan. The Executive was requested to coral and prioritise the recommendations and provide an updated paper for the December Board meeting.

Exec

Ms Burns left the meeting

8. Corporate Communications

8.1 Corporate Communications Plan 2019

Mr McCormick gave a presentation to the Board on AFBI's refreshed approach to Corporate Communications and outlined the following key components of the Corporate Communications Plan 2019:-

- Internal Communications Plan
- Social Media Plan
- External Press Plan
- Stakeholder Engagement Plan
- Events / Public relations Plan
- Website and Publications Plan

In touching on the activities undertaken by the Corporate Communications Unit from April to October 2018, Mr McCormick demonstrated how the profile of AFBI has been raised through participation in the ITN Biology Week and the BBC programme '*Home Ground*'. It was also reported that a number of journalists had made their first visit to AFBI during this time.

The Board was presented with a number of options for the new brand consolidation process, a refresh of the logo, new positioning statement and three

corporate messages. The Board provided input into these elements and the Executive will take this forward.

**ACTION
Exec**

The Board also noted the new strategic events calendar which adopts a themed approach aligning key messages with the current AFBI Corporate Plan and Business Plan.

8.2 Media Monitoring

The Board noted the current arrangements in relation to Media Monitoring.

8.3 Stakeholder Engagement

The Board noted the paper on the Stakeholder Engagement Plan 2019 which includes the proposals for an 'AFBI Stakeholder Engagement Forum'. This was originally foreseen as an 'Industry Advisory Group' but given the complexity of the stakeholder sectors, the Forum will consist of three panels covering 'Ecosystems and Environment', 'Sustainable Livestock Systems' and 'Protection of Animal and Public Health' as well as an overarching steering group. The forum is envisaged to be operational in 2019.

The Board encouraged the appointment of external chairs for the three panels. It was agreed that the Forum Steering Group will be chaired by Mr Coffey and will include DAERA representation. The frequency of meetings will be confirmed.

In conclusion, the Chair thanked Mr McCormick for the overall presentation and Stakeholder Engagement paper. The Board indicated that it was content with the general direction of travel.

9. Any Other Business

9.1 NI leadership & Governance Conference 2018

The Chair tabled the agenda for the NI leadership and Governance Conference due to take place Tuesday 27 November 2018 at the Lisburn Civic Centre. Any Board members wishing to register for the event were asked to inform the Secretariat by return.

Board

9.2 AFBI Strategic Alliance

The Deputy Chair sought an update of the governance arrangements in relation to the AFBI Strategic Alliance with Queen's University Belfast (QUB). The Executive informed the Board that it had received a draft report on governance arrangements and that this was in the process of being finalised. A further meeting with QUB representatives is also due to take place in the coming weeks.

The Board asked that the report be tabled at the December meeting of the Board and that they also be provided with an update on the key actions arising from the previous meeting with QUB.

Exec

10. Date of Next meeting

The next AFBI Board meeting will be held on Wednesday 12 December 2018 at AFBI Newforge.

The next AFBI Board Workshop will be held on Thursday 7 February 2019 in the Manor Suite, College of Agricultural Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE), Greenmount Campus, 45 Tirgracy Road, Antrim.

Signed: _____
(Chairperson)

Date: _____