

ON 19th JANUARY 2022

TELECONFERENCE

PRESENT: Mike Sheldon (MS) – Chair, Robert Beckett (RBe), Robin Thompson (RT), Robert Mutimer (RM), Rupinder Ashworth (RA), Mark Houghton (MH), Tim Bradshaw (TB), William De Klein (WDK), Adam Cheale (ACH), Rick Buckle (RB)

APOLOGIES: Adam Cheale (ACH), Chris Aldersley (ChA)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Angela Christison (AC) - Sector director – AHDB Pork, Tim Rycroft (TR) – CEO , Will Jackson (WJ) - Divisional Director of Engagement, Roseanne Thomas (RS) – Communications Director , Chris Gooderham (CHG) – Head of Market Specialists (Dairy & Livestock) , Nicola Dodd (NC) – Senior Marketing Manager
Lenka Rihova (LR) – Personal Assistant (Minutes)

AGENDA ITEM 1 – Apologies for absence

The Chair opened the meeting at 8.30am and welcomed those in attendance.

Apologies were received from ACH and ChA.

AGENDA ITEM 2 – Declarations of Interest

There were no new declarations of interest.

AGENDA ITEM 3 – Minutes from the meeting held on 25th November 2021 and 14th December

The minutes from the meeting held on the above dates were accepted as a true record and will be signed by the Chair.

AGENDA ITEM 4 – Matters arising

All the matters arising, and action points were either completed, on the agenda, or in hand.

A discussion took place around the ratification process for Sector Council members. Some concern had been expressed in relation to the representation of processors. The Council agreed that it is important for all stakeholders have confidence in the ratification process, and that there should be a properly balanced Sector Council. The system will be democratic, but will also ensure that all sections of the industry will be represented on the Council. The Council agreed that weighting the ratification process by scale of levy contribution would ensure a reasonable balance. This recommendation has been taken to the Main AHDB Board.

The Council's recommendation is to have the ratification process weighted in this ways different from the other three sectors, which were each recommending one levy payer/one vote on the ratification. The Council understood the difference.

AGENDA ITEM 5 – Directors Report

The report was taken as read.

Some concern was expressed over the accuracy of the estimated numbers of pigs being killed in the England on a weekly basis. It was confirmed that the figures were indeed estimates and so would deviate from actuals (published later). There is a monthly slaughter figures published by Defra, which is the actual slaughter. It is not compulsory for processors to report to AHDB how many pigs have been slaughtered, therefore AHDB's weekly estimates, while more timely than the monthly data, are likely not to match later published actuals. It is compulsory to report the numbers to Defra on a monthly basis, but not to AHDB more frequently. Several Council members suggested that a long-term solution would be to make it compulsory for all abattoirs to submit all their slaughter numbers to AHDB on a weekly basis.

AGENDA ITEM 6 – Update on Workstreams

A paper had been distributed to the Council prior to the meeting. Needs and workstreams, previously presented to the Council, have been refined based on the received feedback. The aim of this meeting

was to get the Council's approval that this is the final version that will be used in the Shape the Future process.

The objective is that the levy payer has a much clearer understanding of what AHDB does for them and that they can vote accordingly. This material will be translated into a much more palatable form. This is vital in forming the foundation of the communications.

The Council approved the pork sector needs as expressed in the paper.

The Council went through the workstreams. The only significant discussion was around the following workstreams. The Council noted:

- **Education Programme**

- ⇒ some uncertainty around the likelihood of success
- ⇒ agreement that educating children about nutrition is important
- ⇒ broad agreement that it should be included in the Shape the Future process

- **Exports**

- ⇒ there is a challenge in demonstrating the evidence of what has been achieved and where the value is generated in the Export Market Development work.

- **Animal health and welfare**

- ⇒ communication of what AHDB does is important, for example: Pig Health Scheme, eMB, eAML2, Real Welfare as farmers didn't always know that AHDB delivered these industry programmes.
- ⇒ some concern about the usefulness of Real Welfare data. The Council understood that a report was published periodically, which set out the continuing evidence for welfare outcomes on British pig farms, but some doubts remained. Encouragement to see us leveraging the data for the industry's benefit.

A query was raised about the voting process and whether the people who have voted will have an opportunity to ask questions. The Council understood that the process is about how important any proposed area of work is to the levy payer's business, rather than a yes/no vote. It was confirmed that there will be a free text box for comments.

- **People in Agriculture**

- ⇒ some concern that the whole cost of the training that we do in KE is Potentially not included in this workstream.
- ⇒ it was important to establish relationship with TIAH (The Institute for Agriculture and Horticulture)

- **Supporting our Industry to Deliver Sustainable Change**

- ⇒ This is an enormous challenge. The Council agreed that social media channels & reactive statements would be very important, and that it would be vital to develop a range of success stories.

AC provided an update on the FCR tool, reporting that AHDB has provisionally identified a two suppliers who could build the tool. The Council agreed that explicit support from NPA, integrators, Red Tractor and the wider industry is essential to the success of the project. AC reported that meetings are in place with those stakeholders to establish whether or not they would overtly support such a tool being widely used within the industry (i.e. via establishing it as a Red Tractor standard for example). Some concern was expressed over duplication with existing tools used by producers, but it was agreed that there is a role for this tool and it could be useful to our levy payers in demonstrating credentials and stimulating progress.

The Council approved (with some small changes) the workstreams that will be used to set the questions in the Shape the Future vote.

On behalf of the Council, the Chair thanked AC and the AHDB team for their work on the sector needs & workstreams.

TR briefly reported on current activities at AHDB and the progress we are making in transitioning into a new operating model. Focus is on Shape the Future, how AHDB continues to evolve post the vote and ways in which we can continue to serve levy payers better and make our product, tools and services even more relevant. TR thanked the Council for their support in delivering the change.

AGENDA ITEM 7 – Shape the Future – update on managing the process

RT presented on the widespread communication activities that are supporting Shape the Future, and reported that registration numbers are increasing slowly. The Council agreed that the KE team's activity would be crucial to the success of registering sufficient levy-payers.

Some concern was expressed over the slow rate of registration (Pork). The expectation is that registrations will accelerate as we get closer towards the March deadline. However, the Council agreed that we should not wait for that to happen, and that we should use all endeavours to accelerate registrations now. Working with integrators would deliver a significant proportion of the industry quickly. The number of pigs covered will give us a better feel for how much of the industry we have reached as opposed to how many individual registrations.

Council Members were again asked to use their connections within the industry to promote registrations and to ensure they had registered themselves.

CHG described how the voting results would be presented. The aim is to provide weighted & unweighted results for all questions. Results will also be expressed by pigs owned/not owned, by size of business split into several bands, and by stage of production. The Council accepted the draft bandings, but agreed that more refinement was needed to make them most useful.

Clarity was requested on the process of registering as a processor/integrator. A single registration, both as a processor and an integrator is possible. The instructions for completing the registration process are included as part of the registration process.

It was agreed that the Sector Council members had a key role in encouraging registrations (Links to above action)

AGENDA ITEM 8 – Feedback from Council members

The Sector Council members were encouraged to complete their own registrations and encourage those from others.

Some Council members reported issues with receiving confirmation email once registered.

AGENDA ITEM 9 – Levy rate for 2022/23

A paper had been distributed prior to the meeting. The Chair reminded members that the AHDB board recommends levy rates to ministers every year and then ministers agree those levy rates. The proposal was to leave the levy rate as it is for 22/23.

The Pork Sector Council agreed to recommend that the levy rate remain the same as current levy rates and that applies to both producer and processor levies.

It was noted that, as usual, a proportion of levy income must be repatriated to Scotland. Some members encouraged careful forecasting, to take account of changing production and slaughter patterns in Scotland.

AGENDA ITEM 10 – Cull and Render

This is the facility that would be available to producers who need to cull pigs they cannot sell, but who did not want to cull them on the farm. It is intended to be a last resort facility for producers.

Dominic Charman, a licenced slaughter man, has been contracted to scope the potential to provide such a cull and render facility, and this report will be presented to the Council. AHDB is working with Defra, APHA and PVS to develop the report into an authorised proposal. A potential site has been identified. Final proposals should be ready by the end of January and, if viable, these would go to Council for approval.

AGENDA ITEM 11 – Marketing update

ND joined the meeting at 11.15am and provided a summary of the current AHDB work to influence consumers: the midweek meals campaign, the eat balanced campaign, the meat aisle improvement activity, as well as defending the industry by challenging unsupported claims made by plant-based food brands. The We Eat Balanced Campaign went live on 4th January and is running until 28th February. Support for the campaign has been received from industry and consumers.

AGENDA ITEM 12 – AOB & Finish

The Council discussed CO2 supplies in abattoirs. The deal with CF industries to keep CO2 production going comes to an end at the end of January. There is uncertainty around whether CF industries are going to continue to operate in a way that would provide as much CO2. Processor members reported that they have been seeking alternative sources for CO2 in the UK. Food grade CO2 is required for stunning pigs, and this limits supply opportunities. The Council felt that supply is going to be a matter of price rather than absolute availability. It was agreed that there is no action for AHDB on this time.

Defra has announced that the non-penetrative captive bolt gun has been added to the list of approved methods for the killing of young pigs. It introduces a method, which was not previously approved. Blunt force trauma is not permitted for the killing of small pigs, which poses a concern for most pig producers as to what happens next.

There was a short consultation, to which AHDB, NPA and others responded. An immediate issue is that the majority of producers do not have anything for euthanasia of piglets other than blunt force trauma, and would struggle to acquire suitable equipment and to deliver the necessary training. The Council agreed that the best available outcome would be a period of grace for producers to adjust. It was noted that the Pig Health and Welfare Council has not been consulted on this. It was also noted that the ruling will also affect lambs and goats and it was suggested that contact should be made with the National Sheep Association. There is no further action for AHDB on this.

The processors reported on butcher recruitment. They have had some visa applications and accommodation issues. Some workers are expected to arrive, however the target of 800 butchers will not be achieved.

The Council noted that there was continuing discussion in the industry about the effect of exceptionally discounted slaughter prices on the SPP. The Chair restated that the SPP has a fixed definition to which all parties adhere. AHDB is prepared to enter into a process of reviewing price reporting. This may result in a price reporting regime with different definitions and different names, but this would be the result of formal consultation.