

**SUMMARY MINUTES OF THE SIXTY EIGHTH MEETING OF THE AGRICULTURE AND
HORTICULTURE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
HELD ON THURSDAY 30 MAY 2019 AT 8.30 A.M.**

AHDB, STONELEIGH PARK

PRESENT:

Hayley Campbell-Gibbons (HC-G), Peter Kendall (PK) (Chair), Will Lifford (WL), George Lyon (GL), Adam Quinney (AQ), Mike Sheldon (MS), Janet Swadling (JS), Paul Temple (PT)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Ken Boyns (KB), Tom Hind (TH), Rebecca Geraghty (RG), Jane King (JK), Richard Laverick (RL), Tim Mordan (TM), Sue Walker (SW)

AGENDA ITEM 1 – APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Sophie Churchill (SC) and Gwyn Jones (GJ).

AGENDA ITEM 2 - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest recorded.

AGENDA ITEM 3 – MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26 MARCH 2019

The minutes of the Board meeting held on 26 March were accepted as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

AGENDA ITEM 4 – MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 26 MARCH

Employee engagement, performance

More detail had been included in the HR report relating to employee engagement, performance, etc. This year's employee engagement survey had just concluded, this was the second year that the Gallup survey had been undertaken. Results were being analysed and will be reported at the next meeting of the Board in July. End of year appraisals were taking place and should be completed by the end of June following which calibration will be carried out.

MLC Pension Scheme

Potential risks to the MLC Pension Scheme were discussed and it was agreed that a paper should be brought to the Board.

Action: A paper relating to the MLC Pension Scheme will be prepared for the September 2019 Board meeting

Levy Payer Satisfaction Survey Working Group

The Levy Payer Satisfaction Survey Working Group had been established. The group comprised of Board members, communications, KE and MI representatives. To date a review had taken place of methodology and identified key themes of work. Progress and initial findings will be available for the Board in July. JK commented that it was crucial that the research findings were examined and to be mindful that a new strategy was being developed.

Action: Progress and initial findings from the Levy Payer Satisfaction Survey Working Group will be shared with the Board in July

Number of posts

The narrative relating to comparison of headcount had been included in the Annual Report and Accounts (ARA).

Horticulture levy collection working group

HC-G reported that the first meeting of the Horticulture levy collection working group will take place on 3 June with 14 growers attending. HC-G will circulate the meeting papers to the Board along with a post-meeting summary. TM commented that he had met with representatives of the British Growers Association and other Horticulture trade bodies recently. TM provided the Board with an update on the request for views. He will get in touch with PK/JK when more information is available.

Action: HC-G will circulate the papers for the Horticulture levy collection work group meeting to the Board along with a post-meeting summary

Communication evaluation targets

CW will clarify what comms metrics are seen on a regular basis by the Board relating to web traffic, social media, events, etc. If the Board requires additional information, JK/CW should be informed.

Action: CW will clarify what comms metrics are seen on a regular basis by the Board

Visit to Herefordshire and Leadership Team Deliverables for 2019/20

The next Board meeting will be held in Herefordshire. JK provided details of the event which would take place the day before with levy payers. JK asked about the key messages which the Board would like the levy payers to hear. JK will feed back to CW and Guy Attenborough who will be asked to come up with an outline plan for the two days and this will be circulated to the Board. The deliverables for the LT during 2019/20 had been circulated to the Board in the CEO report.

Action: A plan for the visit to Herefordshire will be drafted and circulated to the Board

Government Pay Policy

TM reported that the Government Pay Policy was expected soon.

Whistleblowing Policy

RG reported that following the last Board meeting Jackie Kay had been exploring with other Arms Length Bodies of Defra the Whistleblowing Policy. It is likely that AHDB will use a third party organisation who can provide an independent contact point for whistleblowing cases. Jackie Kay will ensure that this proposal is satisfactory with Defra.

Jackie Kay will bring the Whistleblowing Policy to the Board for approval

IS Strategy

The draft IS Strategy is complete but it is felt that some of the possible implications are best dealt with after the Request for Views outcome is known and when the AHDB Strategy is complete, therefore it has been put on hold at present. There was however, a concern relating to some risks relating to software coming out of support and proposals to manage those risks, this will come to the Leadership Team in June. The ARAC had raised concerns at its meeting on 29 May and will receive an update at its meeting in September. Going forward it was agreed that there will only be one overall corporate strategy supported by functional and service team plans.

AGENDA ITEM 5 – MEASURING OUR PERFORMANCE

David Swales (DS) joined the meeting for this item.

The Board was updated on work to embed performance measurement and evaluation across the organisation to measure overall effectiveness.

The AHDB Strategy 2017-2020 outlined four general outcomes which serve as an indicator of success. Under each of the outcomes a set of targets was agreed with the AHDB Board in 2017. These targets are reported in the Annual Report & Accounts and provide a key “top down” mechanism to assess how AHDB is performing. In addition, “bottom up” evaluation mechanisms are also being put in place to measure the impact of activities with the intention of developing a performance and evaluation culture within the organisation to ensure that there is an improvement of return on levy investment. This work includes developing evaluation plans for all levy-payer facing programmes of work and monitoring progress against the sector specific operational targets. DS reported that good progress had been made in the past two years. In May 2019, a total of 30 evaluation plans were in place with a further 17 requiring development. Three final or interim evaluation reports have been completed in the past year with none overdue.

A second internal AHDB Evaluation Summary Report was published in May 2019 which provides an overview of progress against targets and findings from the activity evaluations which have been conducted to date. A full three-year report will be produced in April 2020, which will provide a comprehensive assessment of how AHDB has performed against the Strategy. DS commented that all external projects over £50k were the subject of an investment test.

A discussion took place relating to return on investment for the Levy Payer. There was overall agreement that this was critical for the organisation. GL commented that this activity is key to the communications plan going forward.

AGENDA ITEM 6 – TECHNICAL UPDATE: FARM EXCELLENCE PLATFORM

Susannah Bolton (SB), Tim Isaac (TI) and Jon Parry (JP) joined the meeting for this item.

The Board was informed that a survey had been conducted amongst 2018 Farm Excellence Platform (FEP) event attendees. The survey comprised 360 telephone interviews with levy payers and stakeholders who had attended at least one FEP event in 2018. All interviews had taken place between 9 January and 7 February 2019. It was clear from the results of the survey that the majority of levy payers were satisfied with FEP events and reported one or more positive business outcomes as a result of attending FEP events and for 85% at least one of these outcomes brought a critical benefit to their business. The majority of levy payers had increased their technical knowledge and increased their knowledge and understanding through peer to peer learning as a result of attending an event. 58% of levy payers indicated that there would be a financial benefit to their businesses as a direct result of attending events.

After discussion, the Board agreed that this was an excellent piece of work and the presentation should be shared with all sector boards.

Action: The FEP presentation should be presented at all future sector board meetings

AGENDA ITEM 7 – AHDB STRATEGY

Phil Bicknell (PB) and Martin Grantley-Smith (MGS) joined the meeting for this item.

Development of the strategy for 2020 onwards was continuing. Discussions had been taking place with external stakeholders which were being done at an early stage and PB provided feedback on comments received. TM commented that this was a good piece of work, it was vital that the customer was put first and it should be spelt out the things that AHDB can do. It was important to consider doing fewer things well. TH commented that there was a need to identify priorities, which will signal to staff what is not being undertaken in the future.

The Board was complimentary about the “doughnut” slide contained within PB’s strategy presentation and asked for more information around the segments. An update paper will be written for the Board capturing progress and thoughts to date. This will be circulated ahead of a conference call where we will explore how key activity is captured.

Action: A work in progress paper on the new strategy will be written for the Board which will be circulated in advance of a conference call taking place before the next meeting

AGENDA ITEM 8 – FOOD AND DRINK SECTOR COUNCIL (FDSC) UPDATE

PK/TH provided the Board with an update on the FDSC. TH commented that the FDSC had been created via the Industrial Strategy and brought together industry leaders along with Government at a senior level.

A number of working groups had been established which included one looking at productivity which PK chaired. A report had been drafted which will go to the FDSC on 1 July. Discussions had been taking place with Defra on some key deliverables.

AGENDA ITEM 9 – LIP DELIVERY AGREEMENT AND FULL BUSINESS CASE

RL provided an update on the Livestock Information Programme (LIP). Detail around the approvals process was provided. A letter of comfort had been sent to JK from Defra which was signed and returned. A far more detailed version of the Delivery Agreement had been received, this included schedules missing from previous iterations along with commentary from Defra Legal. The document will now go to the AHDB legal advisers who will review on AHDB's behalf. The Business Case will be received in the near future, changes had been made following a meeting of the Defra Programme Board last week. RL provided the Board with details around the working approval timeline.

AGENDA ITEM 9 – LIP APPROVAL PROCESS AND RISK MANAGEMENT

A discussion around risks and responsibilities relating to LIP took place.

MS commented that ARAC had received an audit report on LIP which had been undertaken by RSM. The review had taken place in March 2019 with the report having recently been received. KB commented that the work done in March was driven by the fact that the Delivery Agreement signing was originally expected at that time. JS commented that it was important to seek assurances if there was failure in delivering the timescales set out in the final business case/delivery agreement. It was agreed that ARAC would review the assurances including a layman's report from AHDB's legal advisers on the Delivery Agreement for the Board to consider.

Action: ARAC will provide assurances to the Board and a layman's report on the LIP Delivery Agreement for the Board to consider

AGENDA ITEM 10 – PROJECT CROSS KEYS

KB provided the Board with an update on Project Crosskeys.

AGENDA ITEM 11 – SECTOR REPORTS + DASHBOARDS

Beef and Lamb

AQ asked for the report to be taken as read and reminded the Board that there was no beef promotion this year, only lamb.

Cereals and Oilseeds

PT commented that there were two new ex-monitor farm members on the C&O Board. The marketplace was seeing flux and nervousness about what is happening in USA as well as African Swine Flu in China.

PT reported that the C&O Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee was being stood down.

Dairy

The Dairy report was taken as read.

Horticulture

The Horticulture report was taken as read.

Pork

The Pork report was taken as read.

Potatoes

The Potatoes report was taken as read.

AGENDA ITEM 12 – CORPORATE REPORT

RG provided an update on Farmbench. Development is continuing with the current focus on completing the functionality required prior to the website made public. Usage figures show that over 850 users have registered so far in 2019 which is positive considering the site is not public and is still in the testing phase. Generally, user feedback is positive particularly from users transitioning from the first Farmbench programme. RG commented that part of the digital development team will join with the Farm Economics team on 1 July on a temporary basis.

JS welcomed the additional granularity contained in the HR report. JS will speak to Jackie Kay relating to HR dashboards.

Action: JS will speak to Jackie Kay about HR dashboards

AGENDA ITEM 13 – PROJECT MANAGEMENT

RG provided an overview of projects overseen by the Project Management Office. A discussion on project oversight had taken place at the ARAC on 29 May, ARAC requested a briefing on how the executive prioritise projects and activities and what mechanisms are in place to manage resource across teams to deliver successfully and receive the same reports relating to Project Management as the Leadership Team.

Action: ARAC requested a briefing on how the executive prioritise projects and activities and what mechanisms are in place to manage resource across teams to deliver successfully and receive the same reports relating to Project Management as the Leadership Team

AGENDA ITEM 14 – RISK

KB provided the Board with an update on VAT.

It was agreed to adjust the risks relating to levy withdrawal to amber and GDPR to green.

AGENDA ITEM 15 – CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

PK asked for his report to be taken as read. PK commented on his recent meeting with Fergus Ewing in Edinburgh.

AGENDA ITEM 16 – CEO REPORT

JK reported that since the last Board meeting, there had been good progress on what the building blocks of a skills strategy might be for primary production in agriculture and horticulture. The current view of the Skills Leadership Group was that an increase in the uptake of training and Continuous Professional Development is crucial to the future productivity and viability of the industry. There is an urgent need to enable the industry to recognise the value of training as well as simplifying access to training, centrally recording training and linking the uptake of training to incentives. There was a need to create an institute for Food, Farming and Horticulture which serves as the home of professional development and training in England. It was noted that the Skills Leadership Group's remit did not include the Devolved Administrations.

AGENDA ITEM 17 – ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS

The ARAC had considered the Annual Report and Accounts (ARA) at its meeting on 29 May and recommended approval from the Board which was given. After Ministerial review, PK and JK will sign the ARA following which it will be sent to the NAO Comptroller and Auditor General prior to being laid in Parliament on 11 July 2019. KB pointed out that there was still an outstanding item to be resolved with the NAO around pensions, it was hoped that this would not create a delay. It was agreed that WL would approve any changes to the ARA relating to pension matters on behalf of the Board.

Action: WL will approve any changes to the ARA relating to pension matters on behalf of the Board

AGENDA ITEM 18 – BOARD GOVERNANCE SCHEDULE AND FORWARD PLANNING

The items for the July Board agenda will be reviewed.

AGENDA ITEM 18 – BOARD EFFECTIVENESS

The results of the 2018/19 Board Effectiveness Survey were discussed as well as the proposed areas for development during 2019. This was the fourth year that the survey had been undertaken. TM requested that diversity of boards should be captured. RG asked the Board to provide her with its views on this subject.

JS enquired whether sector boards undertook board effectiveness surveys, thought will be given on how this is done.

There is a requirement in the central government corporate governance code that once every three years an independent view is included in the board effectiveness review. WL commented that he had experience of this in other boards.

Action:

- **Diversity of boards should be captured. The Board was asked to provide RG with thoughts**
- **Board effectiveness reviews for sector boards will be considered**
- **WL will supply RG with positive ways of including an independent perspective in board effectiveness reviews**

AGENDA ITEM 19 – HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT

There had been 34 accidents/incidents/near misses reported in the rolling 12 months to end of April 2019 across AHDB. Of the accidents, there had been three of a nature sufficiently serious to require reporting to the Health and Safety Executive under RIDDOR regulations, all three had been previously reported to the Board.

The Board had undertaken Health and Safety training in March 2019. A copy of the HSE's Leading Health and Safety at Work guidance had been sent to the Board separately. The Board was asked to provide feedback to RG.

At the previous Board meeting, clarification had been sought on refresher rates for AHDB health and safety training. A new policy has been developed by the AHDB Health and Safety Committee which had been circulated with the board pack. Records need to be checked on refresher training and this will be brought back to the next Board meeting.

The Board had asked for clarity on the procurement process and contracts with external suppliers. This matter was under review after being highlighted in our organisational audit that controls were evident for high value contracts but there was inconsistency in health and safety vetting of third party providers and a formal process was not visible for low value contracts. Procurement is undergoing a policy review and have committed to including a health and safety section. The policy is likely to be in place by December 2019 and health and safety requirements will be incorporated into the subsequent training programme.

JS welcomed all the additional work that was being done in relation to health and safety. KB agreed to follow up a sentence being inserted in the ARA relating to the Board having undertaken Health and Safety training.

Action:

- **Records need to be checked on Health and Safety refresher training and this will be brought back to the next Board meeting**
- **A sentence will be included in the ARA relating to the Board having undertaken Health and Safety training**
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AGENDA ITEM 20 – AHDB SUB-COMMITTEES

Audit and Risk

WL reported on the closed session that had taken place at the ARAC with the NAO Director including an observation relating to workload pressure that some staff seemed to be under.

Remuneration and Nominations Committee

GL did not have anything to report, the Remuneration and Nominations Committee was meeting immediately after this meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 21 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no further business discussed.

AGENDA ITEM 22 – DATE OF NEXT MEEETING

The next meeting will take place on Tuesday 30 July 2019.

Dates of future meetings

- Tuesday 24 September 2019
- Tuesday 19 November 2019