

## AHDB Horticulture Board meeting

### MINUTES OF THE 54<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE HORTICULTURE BOARD HELD AT 10AM ON 5<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER

#### Teleconference

**PRESENT:** Hayley Campbell-Gibbons (HCG), Ruth Ashfield (RA), Mark Eves (ME), Roma Gwynn (RGw), Rob James (RJ), Keston Williams (KW), Michael Barker (MB), Rob Saunders (RS), Peter Judge (PJ), Robert James (RJ)

**APOLOGIES –** Jamie Dewhurst (JD)

#### **IN ATTENDANCE:**

Jane King (JK) – CEO, Will Jackson (WJ) - Interim Chief Strategy Director, Colin Turner (CT) – Lead Finance Business Partner (Projects), Christine Watts (CHW) – Chief Communications & Market Development Officer, Lenka Rihova (LR) - Minute taker, Lee Abbey (LA) - Chief Adviser (Horticulture & Potatoes) - NFU

#### **AGENDA ITEM 1 – Apologies for absence**

The Chair opened the meeting at 10am and welcomed those in attendance. Apologies received from JD. HCG welcomed Lee Abbey from NFU, CHW, WJ and JK.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 2 – Declarations of interest**

There were no new declarations of interest.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 3 – Minutes from the meetings held on 8<sup>th</sup> September**

The minutes of the last meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> September were accepted as a correct record and will be signed by the Chair.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 4 – Actions from the meetings held on 8<sup>th</sup> September**

HCG confirmed all items were either ongoing, on the agenda or still in progress.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 5 – Chair's report**

The Chair expressed her gratitude towards everyone involved in the current work in relation to the Governance review, Ballot, new Strategy, a new business plan and organisational restructure.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 6 – SSD update**

The report was taken as read.

RA had sent out a list of all the current horticulture funded projects. It is the raw data set, including the name of the project and the money being spent. Once the list has been tidied up, we should be able to see a sector level spend (a better level of detail). We are committed to a very wide range of activities in this sector.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 7 – Management accounts**

The report was taken as read.

A lot of modelling and re-modelling work in place (potential impacts, reduction issues due to Covid-19). The focus is on this year and its priorities.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 10 – Update on Strategy development (closed session)**

LA from NFU left the meeting and re-joined after this session.

WJ provided an update on strategy development and its progress. Long discussions had been held about cross sector vs sector specific work. Focus on each sector and its individual needs. The sector plan will highlight the priorities for the Horticulture sector.

WJ reported on timelines. The 'internal package' will go out to the main AHDB Board on 24<sup>th</sup> November and out publicly on 7<sup>th</sup> December. It will include the top line strategy, governance issues, the Hort sector plan and levy. The intention is to circulate the Hort sector plan to the Board prior to 24<sup>th</sup> November. The sequence of things is important in terms of communication going out.

JK commented on the timings of the Hort Ballot. The aim is mid-January (possibly 13<sup>th</sup>), running for 4 weeks. JK highlighted the importance of communication to the industry about the new strategy and the upcoming reforms.

The group discussed Levy funding and growers' opinion on value for money (AHDB) and their engagement with the new strategy. Focus on being clear on the strategy & future of the organisation, the reforms and the priorities for Horticulture. Levy payer engagement and interaction with the levy payer to be reinvented. Building relationships with growers and more involvement in programmes. The governance review is important in order to deliver better value and efficiency. A concern expressed over multiple layers. Focus on the key things that matter to the growers.

More details requested on timings and current work (to be shared with the industry). HCG is due to do a podcast video blog.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 11 – Ballot update**

CHW provided an update on the Ballot process. There are weekly cross-functional briefings. AHDB procured an independent organisation to run the ballot and an independent overseer. The outcome will be given to Defra and the ministers. The Ballot is about the continuation of a statutory levy (yes/no). There are various parameters around who is eligible to vote. First letter to go out to all levy paying businesses within the next 2 weeks informing them about the process of the work. Meetings, sector events and Q&A to be held. The letter will guide them to the new website where they can find information about what they get for the levy. Second letter to go out closer to the Ballot including the detail on the levy mechanism. The intent is that the Ballot will launch on 13<sup>th</sup> January and will be open for 4 weeks. There is financial modelling in place to understand the implications in case of a no vote. Work ongoing on staff and HR implications. Conversations are in place, emotional support and personal resilience training available. The whole process has a real cross party and multi team approach (communications and implications). The Ballot has been called and AHDB have to deliver it within a reasonable timeframe.

RA clarified that the statutory instrument has to be revoked through parliament.

HCG thanked the team and RA for their hard work around Ballot.

The group discussed communication activities around Ballot and press coverage. It is a busy time for growers. A query was raised over potential redundancies at AHDB, the process and the potential loss of knowledge and expertise. The resourcing plan at AHDB is likely to be very different as a result of the wider strategy, the governance review and other upcoming changes.

LA reported on NFU activities. NFU will be as informative as possible. Q&A may need to be revisited (Ballot). There will be a magazine article on AHDB strategy and Hort Ballot. NFU will remain neutral

as they are representing all sectors. NFU to provide information to their members so that they have the knowledge to base their vote on.

It was felt that changes are required in order to continue with the levy. The aim is to have a fairer levy mechanism. Regular communication important. There will be a session with the Crop Association chairs and on individual basis. Board members to get involved.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 12 – Hort Levy Reform – Update**

CT presented on Hort Levy Reform. Discussions with growers had been held. CT reported on current work, challenges, potential options and next steps. The aim is to have a simpler levy return process and address perceived unfairness of current methodology across the sector.

The new levy model should respect the different levels of need within a sector. The key principals will be in the consultation proposal document.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 13 – AOB**

- Institute of Agriculture & Horticulture

The report was taken as read. A business case was put to Defra. The aim is to have an accreditation mechanism in place. More focus on people developments at all levels and professionalising the industry.

The group briefly discussed the breakdown of sign ballot forms and the area they came from.

The 2021 Hort Board dates are as follows: 19th January, 23rd March, 22nd June and 12th October.

**Signed:**

Hayley Campbell-Gibbons, Chair

**Date:**