

**MINUTES OF DEPARTMENTAL BOARD (DB) MEETING  
WEDNESDAY 31 OCTOBER 2018  
MANOR SUITE, MANOR HOUSE  
GREENMOUNT**

**Members:**

Denis McMahon	Permanent Secretary
Norman Fulton	Deputy Secretary; Food and Farming Group
Fiona McCandless	Deputy Secretary; Rural Affairs, Forest Service and Estate Transformation Group
Robert Huey	Deputy Secretary, Veterinary Service and Animal Health Group
David Reid	Director of Finance
Brian Doherty	Director of Corporate Services
Sharon McCue	Non-Executive Member (NEM)
Bernie Stuart	Non-Executive Member (NEM)

**Apologies:**

David Small	Deputy Secretary; Environment, Marine and Fisheries Group
Gail Downey	Strategic Business Partner, NICS HR

**In Attendance:**

John Mills	Director of Environmental Policy Division (for David Small)
David Torrens	Veterinary Service and Animal Health Group (Item 5)
Mark Goodfellow	Strategic Business Partner, NICS HR (for Gail Downey)
Sean McGrade	Central Management Branch
Martin McKendry	Director of CAFRE (DB Guest)
Angela McAllister	Equality, Diversity & Public Appointments

**Secretariat:**

Kathryn Clarke and Ashley Davidson

Item	Description	Action Owner
<b>Opening</b>		
<b>1</b>	<b>Secretary's Opening Remarks</b>	
	Secretary welcomed everyone to the meeting.	
	Secretary thanked Dr Evelyn Collins and Jacqui McKee from Equality Commission for attending to give a presentation on Section 75 Demonstrating Effective Leadership.	
	Secretary also thanked Mark Goodfellow for deputising for Gail Downey and John Mills for deputising for David Small.	
	Secretary provided a brief update on: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Decision making powers for Departments including legislative developments of the NI (Executive Formations and Exercise of Functions) Bill and the reference to senior officials within the Bill;</li> <li>2. Brexit Trade and Agriculture Committee Meeting on 30 October;</li> </ol>	

	<p>3. Concern with underspends at the Loughs Agency and AFBI; and</p> <p>4. NIFAIS</p>	
1 (i)	<b>Declaration Of interests</b>	
	No interests which relate to today's agenda declared.	
1 (ii)	<b>Previous Minutes</b>	
	Minutes from 26 <sup>th</sup> September 2018 were agreed.	
1 (iii)	<b>Matters Arising &amp; Action Points</b>	
	<p>Bernie Stuart highlighted that, when appropriate, actions will not be marked complete until they have been presented to a sub-committee of the Departmental Board or to the Board itself.</p> <p>A number of actions were updated to reflect Members updates provided at the meeting.</p>	
<b>Strategic Governance</b>		
2	<b>People</b>	
2 (i)	<b>Presentation on Section 75 Demonstrating Effective Leadership</b>	
	<p>Dr Evelyn Collins gave a presentation on Section 75 Demonstrating Effective Leadership, highlighting the following points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The importance of the role of Senior Management in ensuring that a meaningful and effective approach is adopted across DAERA to Section 75 duties;</li> <li>2. The necessity for evidence so the Department can demonstrate its compliance with its commitments under Section 75, showing that it is paying due regard when making decisions to promoting equality of opportunity and good relations. Encouraging Senior Management to ensure Equality Impact Assessments are completed for DAERA policy decisions;</li> <li>3. The real benefits to peoples' lives which can be realised if the Department complies with its statutory duties under Section 75; and</li> <li>4. Congratulating DAERA on the good work to date in fulfilling these duties.</li> </ol> <p>General discussion took place between the Board and Dr Collins on the work underway in DAERA to meet Section 75 duties such as through the Equality &amp; Diversity Steering Group, Diversity &amp; Inclusion Champions and Equality, Diversity &amp; Public Appointments Branch.</p>	
2 (ii)	<b>Monthly Staffing Update</b>	
	<p>Mark Goodfellow presented the paper to the Board which focused on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The number of TPs ongoing within DAERA;</li> <li>2. In-Year Review compliance stats being available for November Board;</li> <li>3. Certification of sick absence compliance; and</li> </ol>	

	<p>4. Encouraging Directors to ensure compliance with Return to Work Interview targets.</p> <p>The Board noted the paper.</p> <p>Discussion took place around the content of the NICSHR Staffing Update paper and vacancy management. The following was agreed by the Board:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. NICSHR to focus their report on the individual needs of DAERA and limit NICSHR updates to those items which are of direct relevance to the DAERA agenda. Full NICSHR Staffing paper to come to DB on a quarterly basis and to the Resourcing Committee with a shortened version in between;</li> <li>2. Brian Doherty and NICS HR to urgently consider options to fill vacancies including using agency contracts, fixed term contracts and other options;</li> <li>3. Grade 3s to agree measures to improve sickness absence certification compliance rates within their Teams;</li> <li>4. Grade 3s to ensure completion of mid-year reviews;</li> <li>5. Staff who have not completed mandatory GDPR, Health &amp; Safety and Fire Safety training to be encouraged to complete it on the basis that failure to do so will be a performance management issue; and</li> <li>6. NICSHR to provide a breakdown of mandatory training non-compliance by Grade 3 Group and to seek an extension to the deadline for completion of the mandatory training outlined in the Staffing Update Paper to allow completion of training by remaining staff.</li> </ol>	<p><b>NICS HR &amp; Brian Doherty</b></p> <p><b>Grade 3s</b> <b>Grade 3s</b></p> <p><b>NICS HR</b></p>
<b>3</b>	<b>Resources</b>	
<b>3 (i)</b>	<b>Budget Position 2018/19</b>	
	<p>David Reid provided an update on 2018/19 expenditure, highlighting:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Preparatory work is underway on European Agricultural Fund 2018 accounts;</li> <li>2. Potential underspend in AFBI – AFBI is aware that January monitoring round is last chance to realign budget;</li> <li>3. Potential underspend in Loughs Agency – this is being pursued by Finance;</li> <li>4. Importance of spending out on 18/19 budgets;</li> <li>5. A return due to DoF on 9/11 identifying what measures the Department can put in place to manage its projected pressures. This return will be with Secretary on 5/11;</li> <li>6. The level of TB compensation and the factors that have led to the increase in compensation costs;</li> <li>7. DB requested that the content of the annexes to the Budget Position Paper are reviewed to ensure that the potential for significant budget variances are more easily identified; and</li> <li>8. Roger Downey will deputise as Director of Finance in</li> </ol>	

	<p>David's absence for the November meeting.</p> <p>The Board noted the paper and agreed that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Finance should provide clear visual analysis of resource and capital profiles and spend as part of the monthly update, providing clear warning of potential under/overspends in the Annexes to the Paper;</li> <li>2. Due to concern, updates on the Loughs Agency, AFBI and other potential variances in spend profile will be outlined in the Budget Paper for DB. This will include an outline of actions identified to deal with any issues that arise;</li> <li>3. The Chief Veterinary Officer will provide an update to DB outlining the factors that have led to increased compensation levels. This will include specific consideration of the governance arrangements around decision making; and</li> <li>4. Grade 3s should take forward mitigating actions to ensure all resources are spent with no underspends</li> </ol>	<p><b>David Reid</b></p> <p><b>David Reid</b></p> <p><b>Robert Huey</b></p> <p><b>Grade 3s</b></p>
<b>3(ii)</b>	<b>ARAC Update</b>	
	<p>Sharon McCue presented the paper to the Board in support of the verbal updated provided to DB on 26 September. Sharon highlighted:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. ARAC had discussed governance issues relating to AFBI and the AFBI accounts have since been signed off;</li> <li>2. Due dates have been set for AFBI PAC recommendations;</li> <li>3. The next ARAC meeting will be held on 22 November;</li> <li>4. A response to the limited opinion on Trade Certification is due to be provided for the next ARAC meeting; and</li> <li>5. A report on Internal Audit recommendations outstanding for longer than 6 months is also due for next ARAC meeting</li> </ol> <p>The Board noted the paper.</p> <p>Following discussion, it was agreed that Brian Doherty should take over responsibility for Arm's Length Bodies in January 2019.</p>	

<b>4</b>	<b>Business Delivery</b>	
<b>4 (i)</b>	<b>2018/19 DAERA Corporate Scorecard (Q2)</b>	
	<p>David Reid presented his paper to the Board noting at 30 September:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 27 targets are green (on track);</li> <li>2. 3 targets are red (unlikely to be achieved); and</li> <li>3. 8 targets are amber (corrective action needed as going off track)</li> </ol> <p>The Board noted the paper and discussed the targets which are not reported as 'on track' and any remedial action in place to address.</p>	
<b>4 (ii)</b>	<b>Corporate Risk Register Update 2018/19 (Q2)</b>	
	<p>David Reid presented this paper to the Board highlighting at 30 September:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. NIFAIS is to be included on the Corporate Risk Register;</li> <li>2. EU Exceptional Adjustment Aid has been removed as this is no longer considered a Corporate risk;</li> <li>3. 5 extensions to actions were requested, 6 actions completed and 16 are due to complete in October/November; and</li> <li>4. Issues raised by the Delivery Committee.</li> </ol> <p>The Board noted the paper and agreed an update should be provided to November DB on the business case for TB.</p> <p>Secretary commended staff involved in producing the Corporate Risk Register.</p>	<b>Robert Huey</b>
<b>Strategic Issues</b>		
<b>5</b>	<b>NIFAIS Update</b>	
	<p>David Torrens joined the Board for this item.</p> <p>Robert Huey presented his update to the Board on the NIFAIS Programme.</p> <p>The Board noted the paper and agreed;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The SRO and Programme Team should plan a way forward in light of the performance of the contractor to date and the likelihood of successful completion; and</li> <li>2. A Project Assurance Review should be commissioned on behalf of the DAERA Board by the SRO with a view to determining the best way forward to deliver against the quality standards and programme timetable.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Robert Huey</b></p> <p><b>Robert Huey</b></p>
<b>6</b>	<b>Brexit</b>	
	<p>Norman Fulton presented the paper. Norman provided the Board with an update on Brexit developments including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Negotiations;</li> <li>2. Legislation – including Agriculture Bill, Environment Bill, Fisheries Bill and SIs going through Westminster;</li> <li>3. Day 1 preparedness;</li> </ol>	

	<p>4. Contingency planning;  5. Staffing pressures faced within Brexit – 204 approved posts with 82 currently filled coupled with pressure on DSO capacity; and  6. Convergence Funding.</p> <p>The Board noted the update paper and Secretary highlighted the clarity in the papers for Brexit Board and the good work being done on Brexit across the Department.</p>	
<b>7</b>	<b>EU Infractions</b>	
	<p>John Mills presented the paper to the Board highlighting 3 issues which had been raised by EMFG staff as being of significant risk.</p> <p>The Board noted the paper and discussed the potential financial impact of the issues raised.</p> <p>Following further discussion, the Board agreed to be informed every 6 months of those infraction cases being pursued by the EU which involve the Department.</p>	
<b>Closing Items</b>		
<b>8</b>	<b>DB November Forward Agenda &amp; Forward Looking Agenda</b>	
	<p>Agenda for November was agreed with the following amendments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Roger Downey to present Budget Position 2018/19</li> <li>2. NIFAIS update to be added</li> </ol> <p>The following items were added to the Forward Look Agenda:</p> <p><b>December</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Corporate Governance Framework (to include Board Operating Framework) – Brian Doherty</li> </ol> <p><b>January</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Science Transformation Gateway – Fiona McCandless</li> <li>3. Summary of Responses for Agricultural Framework – Norman Fulton</li> </ol>	
<b>9</b>	<b>Internal Communication Messages for Team Brief</b>	
	<p>Items included for inclusion in next available Team Brief were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Presentation by Dr Evelyn Collins (Equality Commission NI) on Section 75 Demonstrating Effective Leadership;</li> <li>2. People (focusing on certification of sick absence, In Year Reviews &amp; vacancy management);</li> <li>3. Budget position;</li> <li>4. Quarterly update on DAERA Corporate Scorecard &amp; Corporate Risk Register</li> <li>5. NIFAIS discussion</li> <li>6. Brexit</li> </ol>	

	7. Environmental compliance discussion 8. Meet & greet with CAFRE staff	
<b>10</b>	<b>AOB</b>	
	The Board discussed the potential benefits of a conference communicating the Environment Strategy when finalised.  The Board requested that the Terms of Reference for the Strategy Group be presented for Board agreement and that David Small should give consideration to an Environment Conference to publicise the Environment Strategy.	<b>David Small</b>
	<b>Close</b>	
	Secretary thanked everyone for their participation and closed the meeting.	

**Date of next meeting: Wednesday 28 November 2018**  
**Venue: F3, Klondyke Building**