



Minutes of the 160th meeting of the **safefood** Advisory Board

Held on Thursday, 20th October 2022 at 9:30am

NICVA Centre, Belfast

PRESENT:

Dr Eddie Rooney (ER) (Chair)
Dr Sinead McCarthy (SMcC)
Dr Kenneth McKenzie (KMcK)
Prof Maeve Henchion (MH) (Joined remotely)
Mr Alex Attwood (AA)
Ms Teresa Canavan (TC)
Prof Elizabeth Keane (EK)
Ms Irene Collins (IC)
Mr Alan Lewis (AL) (Joined remotely)

In attendance:

Dr Gary A. Kearney, Interim Chief Executive (GK)
Ms Patricia Fitzgerald, Director, Corporate Operations (PF) (joined remotely)
Ms Fiona Gilligan, Director, Marketing and Communications (FG)
Dr Aileen McGloin, Director, Nutrition (AMcG)
Ms Alison Dries (AD) Secretariat

Apologies:

Mr Damien McCallion (DMcC) (Vice-Chair)

1. Introduction and apologies

Noted: The Chair welcomed members of the Advisory Board to the meeting held in NICVA Centre, Belfast and thanked the staff at the venue for accommodating the meeting. The Chair informed the meeting would run in three parts, usual governance matters, an extended meeting without the executive present (except CEO), and attendance at the Community Food Initiative Programme workshop.

2. Conflicts of interest

Noted: The Chair asked members if there were any conflicts of interest relating to the agenda. No conflicts of interest were raised.

3. Minutes of meeting held on Thursday, 25 August.

Proposed: KMcK

Seconded: EK

4. Matters arising from the minutes

Noted: No matters were arising.

5. Chief Executive Officers report

Noted: The Chief Executive Officer's report detailed **safefood's** activity since the last Advisory Board meeting on 25 August. The report was circulated to members prior to the meeting and taken as read. The CEO handed over to the following staff members to update on specific areas of work.

Noted: PF updated on the following Corporate Operations matters

- **safefood** concluded its Corporate Plan 2023-2025 and Business Plan 2023 and submitted the documents to the Sponsor Departments. A tight deadline was given to **safefood** to finalise the Business Plan this year. GK thanked all staff members involved for their efforts in turning it around so efficiently. GK and PF are scheduled to meet with the Sponsor Departments later in the day.
- AA questioned the tight deadline given by the Sponsor Departments for finalising the Business Plan given **safefood** are down more than 25% staff, haven't received a budget increase since 2016 and are then asked to produce a Business Plan in three weeks. AA asked if there is any way to raise the burden placed on staff as well as the compliance organisational risks caused by failure to address these ongoing resource deficiencies?
- The Chair advised that it helps if more than one organisation voices their concerns and suggested now is a good time to raise the issues voiced today and at previous meetings due to year end and the fact **safefood** will be entering a new Corporate Plan.

Noted: FG informed of the following updates in Communications

- The START healthy weight campaign went live on 17 October and has received good coverage in the media so far. The campaign will run for four weeks featuring Irish athlete Derval O'Rourke and Northern Ireland Women's International Captain, Marissa Callaghan as ambassadors. This phase will end a five-year campaign which has been a beneficial multi-partner campaign across the island of Ireland. Advertising will continue in 2023 to keep the healthy weight message at the forefront whilst START is evaluated.
- Following the START campaign **safefood** will then move into the Christmas food safety campaign which historically has always performed well.
- TC was thanked for chairing the All-island Food Poverty Network event titled 'Hungry for change – the cost-of-living crisis' which was the Networks first in-person event since 2019 and took place on 20 September in Belfast. The event was opened by Minister Deirdre Hargey MLA, Minister for Communities in Northern Ireland and closed by Minister Joe O'Brien T.D., Minister of State with responsibility for Community Development and Charities in Ireland. This is the first time **safefood** have had that level of political profile for food poverty. Thanks were extended to ER and IC for attending and supporting the event.
- **safefood** trained Special Olympics Ireland coaches and development officers this week ahead of the pilot of the joint resource titled 'Health@Play'. This Pilot is expected to roll out in November in one venue in Northern Ireland and two in Ireland. This project first

started out with **safefood** and the Irish Football Associations programme 'On the Ball'. **safefood** is now considering two resources to produce a product for a sporting body rather than a bespoke product for each sport, e.g. for Sport Ireland and Sport NI. The Chair advised that it is great to achieve such a wide reach and said that all sporting bodies are different in terms of maturity so advised to tune in to all bodies for best practise.

Noted: AMcG informed of the following updates in Nutrition

- **safefood** attended the Indian Embassy on invitation to present and discuss **safefood**'s work in the nutrition area. The presentation was very well received, leading to **safefood**'s invitation to participate in a lecture series in the Embassy later this year.

Noted: GK advised of the following updates in Food Science and the Research area

- The research report titled 'The use of antimicrobials in animal health on the island of Ireland: Knowledge, attitudes and behaviours' was published to **safefood**'s website in September and highlighted to the relevant audiences via press release. The report made good recommendations in behavioural drivers, such as one vet per farmer, which would help in the reduction of antimicrobial use.
- KMCK suggested Animal Health Ireland may be an interesting partner for **safefood** in this area.
- MH informed she mentioned the above research project at a Department of Agriculture event held at Dublin Castle last week and suggested bringing the researcher to the forefront could add value to the research. GK informed he was happy to hear suggestions for improvements in this area.
- Board Members were informed of various diary notices for training events and that contracts were nearing completion for the project titled 'Food messaging to children and adolescents – what works?'

6. Financial Memorandum

Noted: **safefood** signed a new Financial Memorandum (FM) with its Sponsor Departments which came into effect from September. The new FM was published to **safefood**'s website, and a copy sent to Advisory Board Members prior to the meeting and taken as read. PF informed of knock-on implications to the Code of Conduct for Advisory Board members and Terms of Reference for Audit and Risk Committee members. PF advised that **safefood** is required to bring the New FM to the attention of the Advisory Board at least once each year.

Noted: The Members of the Advisory Board noted the new FM.

Noted: IC highlighted the CEO's responsibilities for ensuring that **safefood** is staffed on a sound basis set out under paragraph 85 of the FM, yet prescribing the limiting framework and procedures for doing this in paragraph 94.

7. Advisory Board Code of Conduct

Noted: PF advised due to the new FM, changes are required to the Advisory Board Code of Conduct. A clean version of the updated Code of Conduct along with a cover paper summarising the edits was circulated to Advisory Board Members prior to the meeting and taken as read. Discussions took place regarding the number of members required for a quorum.

Agreed: PF will fine tune the wording of the quorum in consultation with the Chair and, subject to this amendment, the Advisory Board approved the changes to the Code of Conduct.

Proposer: SMcC

Seconded: EK

8. Audit and Risk Committee Terms of Reference

Noted: PF informed due to the new FM, changes are also required to the Audit and Risk Committee Terms of Reference. The Term of Reference document with tracked changes along with a cover paper providing details of the edits was circulated to Advisory Board Members prior to the meeting and taken as read. PF informed the meeting that the Audit and Risk Committee have reviewed the changes and are happy to accept them. The TOR was presented to the Board for formal approval.

Proposer: KMcK

Seconded: AA

9. Financial report

Noted: PF presented the financial report for eight months, January to August 2022. Unfortunately, due to staffing shortages, the September Management Accounts were not available prior to the meeting.

Noted: The Chair enquired if **safefood** were on track for a balanced budget to the end of the year? PF responded that at this stage it was difficult to finalise forecasts. However, the expectation is that **safefood** will draw down the full budget allocation for 2022.

10. Tour de table

Noted: KMcK congratulated the staff on the great work taking place with partnering bodies and the two research reports recently published, AMR and Plant based dairy alternatives. He enquired about the momentum of obesity initiatives and **safefood's** sense on this? AMcG spoke to the work taking place in reformulation, development of nutritional standards for various cohorts of the population, guidelines for food parcels, and exploring whole systems approach to dealing with obesity.

Noted: AA asked if there is potential work which can be done in food poverty. The Chair suggested that the impact of food poverty is entering the agenda in a way not seen before, as trying to get this to be seen as anything other than a healthy issue was very difficult in the past. AMcG advised of the work the **safefood** CFI programme undertakes in this area.

11. Meeting of Advisory Board members – without Executive present (CEO was present)

Noted: The Board met with the CEO without the Executive present. Members discussed the best way to maximise their contribution and value to the Board and the executive. There will be a follow-up discussion at the December meeting.

Community Food Initiative workshop

After the meeting, Advisory Board members attended the **safefood** Community Food Initiative workshop also held in the NICVA Centre, Belfast. The event provided an opportunity to bring the CFIs together from across the island, to network and share learnings whilst also providing an opportunity to further develop their knowledge and skills. Individual CFIs reported on the work they have done to date and plans. Derwin Myers presented on the contribution the CFIs made to the development of the START campaign and Sarah Huggett shared the experience of the Healthy Living Centre Alliance and how they integrate their services to provide a holistic approach to health and wellbeing.

Date of next meeting: Thursday, 1 December 2022