

Minutes of the 162nd meeting of the **safefood** Advisory Board
Held on Thursday, 9 February 2023 at 10:30am
safefood office, Dublin

PRESENT:

- Dr Eddie Rooney (ER) (Chair)
- Mr Damien McCallion (DMcC) (Vice-Chair) (joined 11:36)
- Dr Sinead McCarthy (SMcC)
- Dr Kenneth McKenzie (KMcK)
- Mr Alex Attwood (AA) (joined remotely)
- Prof Elizabeth Keane (EK) (joined remotely)
- Ms Irene Collins (IC)
- Prof Maeve Henchion (MH) (joined remotely)
- Mr Alan Lewis (AL)
- Ms Teresa Canavan (TC) (joined remotely)

In attendance:

- Dr Gary A. Kearney, Interim Chief Executive (GK)
- Dr Aileen McGloin, Director Nutrition (AMcG)
- Mr Dermot Moriarty, Manager Marketing & Communications (DM)
- Ms Alison Dries (AD) Secretariat

Apologies: None

1. Introduction and apologies

Noted: The Chair welcomed members of the Advisory Board to the meeting. No apologies were recorded

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, 1 December 2022.

Proposed: KMcK

Seconded: EK

4. Matters arising from the minutes

- **Noted:** It was agreed to keep the suggestion made in point 5 of the previous minutes (December 2022) that the Board invite a member of the FSAI 'reformulation of food products taskforce' to present at a meeting at a suitable date in the future.

5. Presentation on 'Review of international practice on building sustainability into national healthy eating guidelines and practical implications for policy'

Noted: Dr Janas Harrington, Senior lecturer at University College Cork gave a presentation on a **safefood** research project titled 'Review of international practice on building sustainability into national healthy eating guidelines and practical implications for policy'. Janas shared PowerPoint slides on screen which provided a whistle stop tour of the project, a summary of which is captured below.

- The research project consisted of four work packages.
 - Review of existing literature to identify current action and best practice.
 - Measure current beliefs, attitudes, knowledge and behaviours.
 - Convene a group of suitably qualified people in the field to identify current food policies and to rate and prioritise areas of action.
 - Invite groups of consumers to take part in focus groups to gain insight to their understanding of the subject and investigate issues when transitioning to a more sustainable diet.
- The project looked to other countries who had integrated sustainability into food-based dietary guidelines (FBDG) for learnings and considerations.
 - Consumer behaviours and attitudes towards sustainable healthy diets were explored and found that the term 'sustainable diet' had multiple meanings, that health is the strongest motivator, and that there was a low awareness of diet related environmental impacts.

Noted: The Chair thanked Janas for her presentation who fielded various questions from Board Members.

6. Chief Executive Officers report

Noted: The Chief Executive Officer's report detailed **safefood's** activity since the beginning of the year. 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: In the absence of the Director of Corporate Operations the CEO updated on the following Corporate Operations matters

- The C&AG 2021 audit certificate has been received and incorporated into the Annual Report. As required under the Financial Memorandum, **safefood** will submit this to the sponsor departments so it can be laid before the Assembly and the Houses of the Oireachtas.

- Work has commenced to prepare the 2022 Annual Report & Financial Statements. A time frame for the C&AG to undertake the audit of these has yet to be agreed.
- The Chief Specialist in Nutrition recently resigned and **safefood** expects to advertise this roll in an open recruitment competition commencing early March.
- Vacant positions for Finance Executive and Receptionist have been advertised for a second time.
- The CEO is following up with the Sponsor Departments for decision and action in relation to his 2022 request to regrade several critical positions within the Corporate Operations Directorate.
- There remains a number of Corporate and Business Plans not approved, and which cannot be approved until the Executive in NI is in place.

Noted: AMcG provide an update on Climate action work within **safefood**

- Under the Climate Action Plan 2021 (CAP21) public sector bodies were responsible for completing Climate Action Roadmaps by the end of 2022. **safefood's** Climate Action Roadmap outlines how **safefood** aims to meet the requirements of the Climate Action Mandate 2022 and reach our 2030 carbon and energy efficiency targets.
- Obligations in year one mainly relates to leadership and governance, staff training and engagement, procurement, establishing a baseline and identifying actions to reduce energy consumption. **safefood** has a responsibility to report on Climate Action in the annual report going forward.
- A 'Green Team' has been formed in **safefood** to assist and implement the Climate Action Roadmap. **safefood** began to adopt positive progressive measures earlier in 2018 so our energy baseline is already low.

Noted: DM provided the following updates in Communications

- The START campaign aired at the beginning of the year and is now entering evaluation phase. A pilot webinar was held earlier this week (Tuesday 7 February) in conjunction with Libraries Ireland Tallaght. Three libraries live-streamed the event on the night and Dublin South Childcare Committee also attended in person to talk to local parents about childcare grants. The hosts did an excellent job addressing key topics and engaging with the audience. The webinar was attended by some Board members who reported that the positive 'straight talking and repetition of messages' really made an impact.
- Stats received from the website over the Christmas period show visitor numbers have increased, people are staying on the site longer and moving around more. This is down to the Digital and other teams putting in hard work on engaging content and links.
- The Health @ Play Programme with Special Olympics Ireland, which is based on the partnership with the Irish Football Association (IFA) titled 'On the ball' will roll out in March with improved assets based on the pilot feedback in late 2022. The design phase of the assets and training manual for coaches is near completion. A launch of the partnership in NI is set to take place in quarter one. Talks are ongoing with Sports Ireland and GAA to expand the programme.

Noted: KMck spoke of the potential need to make food guidance support linguistically and culturally available to Ukrainians and other new immigrant groups.

Noted: The lunchbox leaflet and Rufus handwashing storybook were translated to Polish and Ukrainian. Stakeholders in the education sector have been asked if translated resources are required.

Noted: GK informed of the following updates from the Knowledge Network

- Following the recent request for expressions of interest to establish three Expert Groups for the Network, four people have been appointed to the group for small food businesses, two people have been appointed to the food hypersensitivity group, and two to the microbiological food safety group.
- The request for expressions of interest were re-advertised to seek additional members for the food hypersensitivity and microbiological food safety groups. Establishing groups in these areas will provide specific guidance and advice to **safefood**.

Noted: AMcG informed of the following updates in Nutrition

- A contract for a new research project titled 'Food messaging to children and adults – what works?' commenced at start of February and will run for 18 months until July 2024.

The overall aim of this research project is to identify effective food message strategies for children and adolescents on the island of Ireland to support stakeholders, including **safefood**, in developing more effective programmes, interventions, and campaigns, with age and developmentally appropriate food messaging, which will result in real behaviour change. It will also allow **safefood** to advise organisations in scaling up of best practices and strategies to address the food literacy needs of the children and young people on the island of Ireland.

7. Financial report

Noted: The CEO presented the financial report for the previous financial year January to December and spoke of a number of open vacancies, some research projects which were not funded and the Community Food Initiative (CFI) programme.

Noted: KMcK advised that it is important to acknowledge significant inflation in the marketing and promotional industry.

8. AOB and tour de table

Noted: The CEO informed he is to arrange in person meetings with the Department of Health food unit in Dublin. This will provide the opportunity to present regular updates on **safefood**'s work, share research and enable networking. The Board welcomed this initiative.

Noted: ER asked if there had been any progress in networking with other North/South bodies? The CEO informed he had met various organisations including CAWT - the cross-border health

and social care partnership, CEO's of N/S bodies and stakeholders and various government sectors. The meetings provided the opportunity for feedback on shared challenges.

Noted: In relation to Climate Action IC suggested contacting the Innovation academy in University College Dublin or Trinity which may be interested in taking **safe food**'s requirement to reduce carbon emissions on as a case study.

9. Meeting of Advisory Board members – without Executive present (CEO and secretariat were present)

Noted: The Board met with the CEO without the Executive present. An outline plan for discussion of relevant strategic topics and operational programmes until June 2024 was circulated prior to the meeting and reviewed during.

Action: Board members to review the plan and feedback any comments/suggestions to AD by 24 February. The board were asked to consider how the meetings could be altered to keep all engaged and make the best use of their individual skill sets.

Noted: The Board completed a self-effectiveness review for 2022, the results of which were summarised by the Chair and captured below

- No serious issues to be reported to the sponsor departments.
- The vast majority of comments were positive.
- Need to ensure the skill set of the Board is being captured to **safe food**'s advantage.
- Diversity of the Board – acknowledgement was given to the fact appointment to the Board is out of the Chair and CEO's control.
- There were several comments and suggestions from members. These will be addressed in planning future Board meetings.

Agreed: Board Members agreed the CEO has discretion to involve Board Members in **safe food**'s work as he deems appropriate.