



Minutes of the 85<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Advisory Board of **safefood**  
Held on Friday, 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2012 at 10.30am  
in **safefood** Dublin offices

---

**PRESENT:**

Ms Lynn Ni Bhaoighealláin (LNB- Chair)  
Mr Thomas Burns (TB)  
Ms Helen O Donnell (HOD)  
Mr Brendan Kehoe (BK)  
Ms Julie Andrews (JA)  
Ms Hannah Su (HS)  
Mr Edward Spellman (ES)  
Dr Mary Upton (MU)  
Mr Alan McGrath (AMG)

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Mr Martin Higgins, Chief Executive (MH)  
Mr Ray Dolan, Director of Corporate Operations (RD)  
Dr Gary Kearney, Director of Food Science (GK)  
Dr Cliodhna Foley Nolan, Director of Human Health and Nutrition  
Ms Fiona Gilligan, Director of Marketing & Communications (FG)  
Ms Julie Carroll, Administrative Assistant  
Ms Fredrica Doyle, PA

**APOLOGIES:**

Ms Jane Wells (JW)  
Ms. Darina Allen (DA – Vice chair)  
Mr Campbell Tweedie

## **1. INTRODUCTION AND APOLOGIES**

**Noted:** The chair opened the meeting and welcomed the new Advisory Board Members and noted apologies of JW and DA.

**Noted:** Members MU and AMG introduced themselves and gave a brief synopsis of their background and current projects.

## **2. Minutes of the meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2012**

**Noted:** The CEO explained that copies of the minutes had been sent to all of the previous Board Members for approval.

**Noted:** JA requested a slight amendment to the minutes which were agreed

**Agreed:** The minutes were adopted with amendments by TB and HOD.

## **3. Matters arising from the minutes**

**Noted:** There were no matters arising from the minutes.

## **4. Review of *safefood* role and remit**

**Noted:** Martin Higgins, CEO of **safefood**, referred to the issue of **safefood**'s role and the report to the Northern Ireland Assembly by Minister Poots on the 6th March 2012 in which he commented on the recent NSMC meeting and a meeting of both Health Ministers.

**Noted:** MH stated that a review of the **safefood** business plan has been requested by both the NI and ROI health departments.

**Noted:** There have been a number of requests for further information on the functions of **safefood** by both departments which have all been answered promptly.

- Noted:** No terms of reference have been received in relation to the role of nutrition in **safefood**.
- Noted:** MH had requested confirmation for **safefood** to proceed with the Stop the Spread advertising campaign from both departments. No response was received and the advertising campaign had to be deferred as a result.
- Noted:** MH pointed out that although both Ministers indicated the necessity of constraint on the budget for **safefood**, they both have indicated their on-going support for the statutory role of the body.
- Noted:** The Board was informed that **safefood** has a record of meeting & exceeding financial targets. Avoidance of duplication and running an efficient department has been paramount for the organisation . The CEO expressed the view that **safefood** now requires a clear direction from the sponsor departments
- Noted:** The Chair thanked the CEO for his update and expressed her own disappointment that **safefood** had not received a response from either Health Department. She welcomed questions from the Board.
- Noted:** HS questioned if it would be worth checking if and where duplication is being carried out as she pointed out there have been some cases of overlapping with the PHA and Southern Trust on different obesity campaigns.
- Noted:** MH stated that PHA has not previously conducted advertising campaigns on obesity. There has been no duplication on an all island basis but what needs to happen is an integrated approach with more clarity on who does what and recognition on what already has been done.
- Noted:** BK proposed a meeting of agencies and added the money under review is already spent in some respects. He also queried what the cost implication of pulling the campaign would be.
- Noted:** MH stated that no advance payment had been made for the deferred advertising. However, the deferral would impact on the take-up of he

campaign message. Recall of the campaign went up from 50% to 70% on the second run of the advertisements.

**Agreed:** The Board agreed the need for a letter to be drafted and sent on its behalf to both Health Ministers.

**Noted** The Chair added the 2012 Business Plan needs to be signed off to move projects within the organisation forward. Clarity on the terms of reference needs to be received from both departments.

**Noted** TB added he was dissatisfied both departments wanted to defer the campaign with no alternative options in place. He stated that obesity is one of the biggest costs to the economy.

#### **4. CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT**

**Noted:** MH gave a brief update from the report and invited the board to contact him if there were any issues arising from it.

**Noted:** There was a discussion around the table about the legislation of calorie content in food. HOD did not feel this was practical or feasible with menus changing on a daily basis. MH agreed that for the 'non-fast-food' sector the situation was complex. CFN added that it might make sense for chains to implement and stricter portion controls were required. In the 'Takeaway My Way' series by **safefood**, results showed the bigger portion sizes were perceived as better value but were far too big. Small improvements with portions, healthier cooking methods and types of food on menus could add up to a big difference.

**Noted:** BK added the health risks from diet drinks are not highlighted enough with particular mention of aspartame and its effects on epilepsy sufferers. CFN added new research had shown there is no difference from a weight point of view drinking diet drinks as waist measurements from those who drank diet/non diet drinks.

**Noted:** With regard to influencing food policy **safefood's** staff members sit on a variety of committees, including the expert advisory group of the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI), which recently proposed the use of the UK's model for restricting advertising of unhealthy foods to children.

There was some discussion around the implications of the proposed model for indigenous products such as cheese and the rationale for not making an exception of cheese.

**Noted:** It has been the practice that two board members sit on the Audit Committee. HS and HOD agreed to represent the Advisory board on the committee.

**Noted:** GK gave an update on the success of The 2012 Knowledge Network Training and Mobility Programme as advertised on the safefood website and through the Knowledge Networks. This Programme enables Knowledge Network members to visit and spend time in another organisation to develop their knowledge/expertise in an area related to the scope of the safefood Networks.

**Noted:** GK stated that research for Project 01-2012: "Survey of artificial colours in selected ethnic foods in takeaways" is currently being carried out by the Southern Region Public Analyst's Laboratory in Cork. The duration of the project will be 5 months. The purpose of this project is to determine the usage of specific food colours in certain ethnic restaurants/takeaways and to elucidate the knowledge of catering industry staff regarding the colour content of the meals they serve.

**Noted:** GK told the board that the research called the "Assessment of the ability of dishcloths to spread harmful bacteria to other kitchen surfaces and determination of the effectiveness of various dishcloth cleaning regimes" with Prof. David McDowell, University of Ulster has produced interim results. This research may be promoted at the Balmoral show, pending approval of the business plan. This data is currently being formulated for **safefood** campaign activities to develop consumer advice in relation to the use of dishcloths.

**Noted:** HOD mentioned having visited a few local projects, Community Food Initiatives 's have had a very positive influence on local communities. The Chair added CFI's were a very sustainable project.

**Noted:** MH highlighted the success of the Take Away My Way Schools Competition which received almost 1,000 entries. He mentioned he was very grateful

to our Advisory Board member Helen O'Donnell who acted as a judge at short notice. The competition which is organised by St. Angela's College, aimed to encourage students to display their cooking skills while also promoting the importance of healthy eating and their ability to save money on the cost of the dish. HOD added she felt it was a fantastic project and in her opinion, money well spent.

## **6. Presentation: Tackling Obesity**

**Noted:** Dr Cliodhna Foley Nolan and Ms Fiona Gilligan gave a presentation to the board on **safefood's** involvement in this area. The presentation encompassed the background to **safefood's** obesity campaign and the results delivered and also considered the area's of fat tax, sugar tax and calorie labelling.

## **7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There been no other business the meeting closed.

**Date of next meeting:** Friday, 11 May, in Dublin at 10:30am