



Minutes of the 108th meeting of the **safefood** Advisory Board

Held on Friday, 26th June 2015 at 10 am

safefood Cork office

PRESENT:

Mr Paul Gibbons (PG) (Chair)

Ms Jane Wells (JW)

Mr Brendan Kehoe (BK)

Mr Thomas Burns (TB)

Dr Mary Upton (MU)

Ms Helen O Donnell (HOD)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr Ray Dolan, Chief Executive (RD)

Dr Clíodhna Foley-Nolan, Director of Human Health and Nutrition
(CFN)

Ms Patricia Fitzgerald, Director of Corporate Operations (PF)

Ms Alison Dries (secretary) (AD)

Ms Angela Cahill, Corporate Operations Manager (AC)

APOLOGIES:

Mr Edward Spellman (ES)

Ms. Darina Allen (DA – Vice chair)

Ms Julie Andrews (JA)

Ms Hannah Su (HS)

Mr Alan McGrath (AMG)

Mr Campbell Tweedie (CT)

Dr Gary Kearney (GK)

Ms Fiona Gilligan (FG)

1. Introduction and apologies

Noted: The Chair welcomed all members of the Advisory Board to the meeting.

Noted: The apologies of DA, JA, HS, ES, CT and AMcG were noted.

Noted: The Chair thanked members of the Advisory Board for travelling to Cork to join staff at corporate day and attend the Advisory Board meeting.

2. Minutes of meeting held on 22nd May 2015

Agreed: The minutes were adopted with no amendments.

3. Matters arising from the minutes

Noted: No matters were arising from the minutes

4. Feedback from the Audit Committee

Noted: Angela Cahill, Corporate Operations Manager with **safe food** provided feedback from the Audit committee meeting, which took place prior to the Board meeting.

Noted: An invitation to tender was posted to a government panel of 10 internal auditors, of this panel three tenders submissions were received.

Noted: An Audit Committee meeting will take place in July in order to appoint a new Internal Auditor. The new Internal Auditor will be asked to review the Terms of Reference; these will then be submitted to the Advisory Board for approval.

Noted: The Audit Committee is considering increasing its numbers to six members.

5. Chief Executive's Report

5.1 Financial statements 2014

The 2014 Financial statements are with the C&AG's office, who have been in contact to confirm there are no issues. We are awaiting official sign off.

5.2 Business Plans 2015 and 2016

safefood are performing well against the 2015 Business Plan. Planning is going well for the 2016 plan.

5.3 HR Issues

For operational reasons, we have decided to fill the Finance Manager vacancy on a six month temporary basis. This relates to a re-grading issue that has remained unresolved for a number of years which effects this position and that of four other members of staff.

The Labour Court Recommended Re-grading the five positions. The Department of Health in the South accepted the Labour Court Recommendation but the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in the North didn't so therefore the re-grading could not be implemented.

The CEO asked PF to look into the issue again. The sponsor departments have agreed look afresh at **safefood's** regrading request.

Noted: JW suggested a letter from the Board may help. It was decided to see how the re-submission progresses before further action is taken, but it was agreed this should stay as an outstanding item for the Board.

5.4 Cork Facilities

Negotiations have been ongoing with the landlord of the Cork office to secure agreement for **safefood** to sub-let part of the ground floor space to the Office of Government Procurement (OGP). This space was vacated by an Office of Public Works (OPW) tenant (National Parks and Wildlife) in December 2013 and **safefood** has accommodated, on a trial rent-free basis, a number of representatives from the OGP since July 2014.

Since the CEO report went to print we have heard from the landlord that sub-letting at a lower-rate may de-value his asset. The OGP have agreed to pay the full amount so AC has contacted the landlord to confirm this and is waiting on a response.

5.5 Stakeholder engagement

The Public Health Agency, Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland and **safefood** held a collaborative planning workshop in the Mount Business and Conference Centre in Belfast on the 4th June 2015. The aim of the workshop was to generate ideas about a collaborative project which can be implemented during the next nine months and which would address a real need that cannot be effectively progressed by any single agency. The three agencies agreed to develop a healthy eating workplace programme aimed at positively influencing the eating habits of staff through awareness programmes and by increasing the accessibility of healthy foods in workplace. The plan is to roll out the programme across office facilitates, trust centres and hospital facilities with potential to widen the project to include government departments and local councils.

5.6 Childhood Obesity campaign

A blended learning pack for GP's has been distributed in Northern Ireland; it assists GP's in approaching the sensitive subject of a patient's weight and the support they can give.

CFN and FG met with the Irish College of General Practitioners where a construction of a plate for children with portion sizes marked out was discussed.

5.7 Folic Acid Campaign

It is planned that the Folic Acid campaign will launch on 20th July to raise awareness of the importance for women of childbearing age to take folic acid whether planning a pregnancy or not.

There was a presentation in the Seanad this week on Folic Acid, so the subject is receiving a lot of attention at present. Obstetricians are recommending that all obese women should take 12 times the recommended dose. **safefood** are not recommending this as there is no scientific evidence and there is a risk of toxicity levels.

BK asked does folic acid have to be taken as a supplement or can food be fortified. CFN responded that at present there is no fortification of food with folic acid and this issue is being assessed separately. **safefood** along with the Department of Health and the Food

Safety Authority Ireland are scheduled to meet to discuss fortification of food with Folic acid on Thursday 2nd July. Public Health in the UK have dismissed fortification which is a limiting factor for ROI due to its close proximity with the UK.

Noted: **safefood** have just signed a research contract to look at the folate levels in women of childbearing age.

5.8 All-island Obesity Action Forum event

Discussion took place regarding the Presentation given by Dr Brendan O'Shea on research being undertaken in GP practices to determine the acceptability of weighing children as a routine part of an appointment.

CFN advised that in NI all children are measured and weighed in school and a letter is sent home if a child is deemed at risk of overweight or obesity. The uptake of this programme is very poor with only 10 per cent of parents taking up the offer of the intervention programme. There is a need to encourage doctors, nurses and parents to be more comfortable with the issue.

MU asked if it was possible for Public Health Nurses to weigh children when they are in the school checking their eyesight and hearing etc. CFN responded that it should be possible but they are not comfortable with the situation.

PG pointed out that through staff recruitment embargos the work load of Public Health Nurses has increased.

TB pointed out the saving in the future which would be made if preventative measures were taken.

5.9 Food Authenticity: Protecting your business from food fraud

This seminar is taking place on 26th June and is being attended by Dr. Gary Kearney and other **safefood** staff members. The event which was organised in partnership with Teagasc and Queen's University Belfast and which is taking place in Ashtown, Dublin, will share new insights into combatting food fraud and how businesses can protect themselves.

5.10 Joint NIFAC/FSCC meeting

safefood was invited to attend and present at the joint meeting of the Northern Ireland Food Advisory Committee (NIFAC) and the Food Safety Consultative Council of the FSAI (FSCC) which took place in May and was held in Dundalk. Dr. James McIntosh presented on the current and future work priorities for **safefood**. There was considerable interest in the Community Food Initiatives. Dr. McIntosh reported it was a very engaging meeting.

Noted: BK sits on the FSAI Consultative Council but was unable to attend that meeting.

Noted: RD will contact the CEO of the FSAI to arrange a meeting. Hopefully the senior management teams of both bodies will meet a couple of times in the year.

5.11 web stats

The statistics from the web were reviewed. CFN suggested circulating Colman Kelly's (**safefood**) presentation from corporate day.

Action: Colman Kelly, Digital Content Executive at **safefood** to present at a future Board meeting.

5.12 Weight loss App

Action: a presentation on safefood's weight loss App (in development) to be given to the Board.

CFN confirmed that RTE plan to go ahead with Operation Transformation in 2016. **safefood** are scheduled to meet with RTE on the 14th July to discuss the weight loss App.

5.13 Calorie content of Alcohol

The issue of calories in alcohol and how **safefood** could get involved in this was raised previously at board meetings. The Chair noted that legislation on alcohol is about to come before the Dail. The Bill will call for all alcohol to be labelled with the calorie count.

Action: PG to email RD information on the Bill and this item will be considered further by **safefood**.

6. Presentation 'What lies within us – mining our microbiota for novel therapies'

Colin Hill from APC/University College Cork presented on the subject of Microbiota. Your Microbiota is determined by differing factors i.e. the type of delivery you experienced in birth, whether you were breast or bottle fed, this shows the importance of building up a good microbiota early. Colin gave an example of giving breast feeding mother probiotics which in turn reduced the rate of asthma sufferers in babies 18 years later.

Noted: The Chair thanked Colin for his very engaging presentation.

Action: safefood to consider whether there is an opportunity to promote nutrition as affecting microbiota.

7. AOB

Noted: The location for the next meeting was discussed. Traditionally one meeting per year is held in Northern Ireland. RD advised that the board room of Waterways Ireland based in Enniskillen had been offered as an alternative to Belfast.

Action: The secretary will email members of the board to ascertain their availability to attend the August meeting in Enniskillen.

Date of next meeting: Friday, 21st August, TBC