



Minutes of the 158th meeting of the **safefood** Advisory Board
Held on Thursday, 16 June 2022 at 9:30am
Windsor Park Stadium, Belfast

PRESENT:

Dr Eddie Rooney (ER) (Chair)
Mr Damien McCallion (DMcC) (Vice-Chair) (Item 11 onwards)
Prof Maeve Henchion (MH)
Mr Alex Attwood (AA)
Ms Teresa Canavan (TC)
Prof Elizabeth Keane (EC) (joined remotely)
Ms Irene Collins (IC)
Mr Alan Lewis (AL)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Dr Gary A. Kearney, Interim Chief Executive (GK)
Ms Patricia Fitzgerald, Director, Corporate Operations (PF)
Ms Fiona Gilligan, Director, Marketing and Communications (FG)
Dr Aileen McGloin, Director, Nutrition (AMcG)
Ms Alison Dries (AD) Secretariat
Ms Linda Gordon, **safefood**, (LG) (Item 11 only)
Ms Mairead McCann, **safefood**, (MMcC) (Item 11 only)

APOLOGIES:

Dr Sinead McCarthy (SMcC)
Dr Kenneth McKenzie (KMck)

1. Introduction and apologies

Noted: The Chair welcomed members of the Advisory Board to the meeting held in Windsor Park Stadium Belfast and thanked the staff at Windsor Park for accommodating the meeting.

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, 24 March.

Proposed: AL

Seconded: IC

4. Matters arising from the minutes

Noted: Discussion took place at the last meeting regarding staffing issues and how these could be resolved with **safefood**'s Sponsor Departments. ER informed of the recent appointment of Peter May as Permanent Secretary in the Department of Health Northern Ireland.

5. Feedback from the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC)

Noted: AA gave a brief update from the Audit and Risk Committee meeting which took place on 3 June 2022.

Noted: The Committee acknowledged the resilience of **safefood** staff. There are currently four permanent and one temporary vacancies in the Corporate Operations Directorate which has resulted in staff taking on additional responsibilities. This issue has been noted as a red risk due to pressures it creates for **safefood** in meeting its obligations and due to concerns for 'staff welfare'.

Noted: Rising inflation rates were also acknowledged as a risk whilst **safefood**'s funding levels remain unchanged.

Noted: The CEO had attended the ARC meeting. AA invited the CEO to set out his thinking for raising these issues with the sponsor departments.

Noted: The Chair highlighted the importance of the ARC in highlighting the challenges to carry out the role which the Governments have asked it to carry out. Long-term sustainability is required to allow the organisation to flourish.

6. Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report 2021

Noted: The Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report was circulated to Board Members prior to the meeting and taken as read.

Noted: PF informed Members the report had been issued to **safefood's** Sponsor Departments and drew attention to paragraph 2 of the Chairpersons statement which offers assurance to the Chief Executive Officer and the Advisory Board that the ARC is satisfied the necessary controls are in place and the organisation is operating satisfactorily. Attention was also drawn to Section 7 of the Annual Report which documents the ARC's key activities of work in 2021.

Noted: The Chair thanked all involved in preparing the Annual Report and thanked AA and EK for representing Board Members on the ARC.

7. 2021 Annual Data Protection Report

Noted: The 4th Annual Data Protection Report was circulated to Members prior to the meeting and taken as read.

Noted: PF described how a data protection framework was put in place to guide **safefood's** work. The organisation is currently at level 3 of the DP Framework out of a scale of 1-5 with level 5 meeting being optimal governance. The report set out the work undertaken in 2021 and the planned work to be completed in 2022. XpertDPO were appointed as DPO in April 2022 and attended the ARC meeting in May.

8. Chief Executive Officers report

Noted: The Chief Executive Officer's report detailed **safefood's** activity since the last Advisory Board meeting on 12 May. 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 areas of work.

Noted: FG informed of the following

- The START campaign is currently live and in its final week of advertising on TV and Radio. Digital advertising and promotion on social media will continue until the end of June. Strong PR coverage was achieved with radio shows such as, Frank

Mitchell of U105 and Drive time, and leading newspapers, Irish News, Herald, Irish Examiner and Irish Independent.

- **safefood's** partnership with the Irish Football Association has attracted the attention of the all-island body - Special Olympics Ireland. Early discussions are taking place with them on a collaboration similar to the IFA 'On the ball' programme.
- The 'Trust the meat thermometer' was the feature at **safefood's** stand at the Balmoral show in May which attracted over 100,000 visitors. Meat thermometers and information leaflets were provided to visitors to the stand to communicate our food safety messages. AL informed he visited the **safefood** stand and congratulated staff on their energy and interaction with visitors.

Noted: AMcG updated on **safefood's** Community Food initiative Programme. Evaluation of the 2019-2022 programme has been completed which shows almost 5,250 families interacted with the programme which increased awareness and knowledge around healthy eating and life skills related to cooking, shopping, planning and budgeting. Learning and future recommendations were detailed.

Noted: The CEO informed of activity taking place in the Knowledge Network in particular a podcast on use-by and best before dates which was linked to by the European Food Safety Authorities (EFSA) website. Attention was also drawn to a recently completed research project on 'Fiscal and pricing policies related to food and non-alcoholic drinks'. The research provides a worldwide helicopter viewpoint and will be of interest to policy makers and government whilst providing a useful piece of research globally. The report is currently being evaluated in-house and will be launched later in the year.

Noted: IC commented that recognition by EFSA is endorsement at the highest level and congratulated all involved. This was followed up by FG who informed **safefood** was also referenced in the Home Economic Leaving Cert exam paper.

9. Financial report

Noted: PF presented the financial report for the four months, January to April 2022. **safefood** is currently slightly under budget and this is mainly due to payment timing issues relating to CFI and research, and this is expected to correct itself later in the year.

10. Bank mandate

Noted: A paper titled 'Advisory Board: Resolution to change **safefood's** bank mandate' was provided to Board members at the meeting. The paper details the reason for

safefood updating its current bank mandate which has been in place since 2015, namely two of the current signatories listed are working for **safefood**. Board members were asked to nominate a proposer and seconder for the resolution detailed in the paper which updates the signatories from 6 members to 4 members of currently employed permanent staff.

Noted: MH asked if there was any associated risk in moving from six signatories to four. PF responded it is better to have more signatories listed as there is more availability but **safefood** did not have an option given its head count.

Proposer: AL

Secunder: IC

Board Resolution passed: The Board approved the resolution to change **safefood**'s iBusiness Banking Authorised Signatories as set out in the paper.

11. Presentation on safefood for Business.

Noted: Dr Linda Gordon and Dr Mairead McCann from the Food Science directorate in **safefood** presented on the '**safefood** for Business' online resource and is summarised below

- From 2016-2019, **safefood** ran 48 food safety training workshops across island, covering basic food microbiology, hygiene & cleaning, allergen control to over 1,000 participants and 350 food businesses.
- With approximately 58,000 businesses producing food, (80% small food businesses), it is clear that this model could not reach all businesses.
- **safefood** recognises small businesses do not always have the time or resources to free up staff to travel for training - there is a need for basic food safety training in small food businesses.
- **safefood**'s solution was to develop an eLearning course on basic food safety, specifically aimed at small food businesses in the food production /processing and catering/ retail sectors.
- **safefood** for Business was launched in November 2021. The resource
 - Is free for small food businesses across the island of Ireland
 - Covers eight key food safety areas
 - Modules can be accessed on any device - smartphones, tablets, and desktops.

Noted: Board members complimented **safefood** on introducing this resource. Members were invited to give feedback or suggestions on channels and networks to increase usage of the resource. The following suggestions were made.

- Community centres – which have kitchens and cafes
- Tourism Ireland has a section on their website 'How to sustain and grow your food business'
- The biggest issue lately in closure orders is pest control. The resource has a module on this, but statistics provided show this is the lowest visited module. It was suggested individual modules be promoted.

12. Any other business

Noted: No other business

13. Meeting of Advisory Board members – without Executive present

Noted: The Board met without the Executive present.

14. Matters arising from meeting of Advisory Board members – without Executive present

Noted: The Chair did not advise the Executive of any matters arising.

Date of next meeting: Thursday, 25 August 2022