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**THE FORESTRY COMMISSION ENGLAND EXECUTIVE BOARD
MINUTES OF THE 107TH MEETING
Conference Room, National Office, Bristol
08 February 2017**

Attendees:

Ian Gambles
Richard Greenhous
Simon Hodgson
Steve Meeks
Stephanie Rhodes
Jo Ridgway
Mike Seddon

Josh Roberts – Minute Secretary

Louisa Aveyard & Rebecca Binns – items 4 and 5

1. Welcome

Ian Gambles opened the meeting.

2. Minutes

The Board cleared the Minutes from the meeting on 14 September 2016 as a true and accurate record.

3. Finance Report

Steve Meeks introduced Paper 01/17, commenting that FCE were well positioned for the end of financial year. He highlighted the key points for the Board to note, including allocation of the £1.25m additional funding from Defra to cover HMRC tax liabilities across FCE/CS, and the £877k balance of the Forestry Innovation Fund. He reassured the Board that the 2017/18 Business Plan was also progressing well through close working with the Defra Business Planning team, and that he would seek approval of the FC Business Plans from the England National Committee in March.

4. Future Operating Model (FOM) – next steps

Ian Gambles gave a presentation to the Board on the future direction of the Forestry Commission in England. The presentation covered the case for change; constraints; current and future governance arrangements; issues for Forest Services and Forest Enterprise and the expected timetable.

The Board discussed how the proposed changes would affect FC staff and how the focus of the change should be presented and communicated to staff. The Board agreed that this would be most effectively achieved by developing a narrative that focused on the outcomes from change rather than the drivers for change. This would be presented to staff as a complete model, one that staff could visualise themselves within. To achieve this would mean incorporating processes where the direction of change is already established into the current version of

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the FOM. So that the FOM stays relevant and manageable enough that all staff can engage with it, the FOM should also stay as concise as possible.

Action 1: Ian Gambles to restructure the Future Operating Model document and circulate a revised outline to the Board – [by 12 Feb](#)

Action 2: Simon Hodgson and Richard Greenhous to draft one page each on the vision and strategy for Forest Enterprise and Forest Services – how they 'will be' in future and the outcomes they will deliver. This will form the basis of the inspiring, outcome focused context for change – [by 03 March](#)

Action 3: Steve Meeks to review the financial, staffing numbers and governance arrangements in the document and ensure consistency with Accounting Officer frameworks and responsibilities – [by end March](#)

Action 4: Jo Ridgway to work with Steve Meeks and provide a narrative to the staffing numbers in the FOM. Jo to propose appropriate wording on Terms & Conditions, including some examples of where these might be flexed - [by 03 March](#)

Action 5a: Ian Gambles to circulate a draft proposal for what the FOM should say about collaborative arrangements, noting the need to embrace an open, sector-oriented approach to collaboration while providing some reassurance to staff, particularly in FS, that connections across public sector forestry will be valued – [by 15 Feb](#)

Action 5b: Ian, Simon Hodgson, Richard Greenhous and Jo Ridgway to meet thereafter to consider and refine this draft.

Action 6: Simon Hodgson and Richard Greenhous to consider what the FOM document should say about the brand and identity of FS and FE and propose wording – [by 03 March](#)

5. Communications – new Defra service

Rebecca Binns and Louisa Aveyard introduced Paper 03 to the Board. They highlighted to the Board the level of resource allocated to Comms for FC. They also updated the Board on progress with current recruitment campaigns. The Board discussed the communication priorities for the Forestry Commission Communications team during transition, within the wider context of the Defra group communication priorities that had recently been confirmed by the Minister, and agreed that it would be critical to ensure that as Defra Comms moved from transition to transformation, FC interests were promoted.

Action 7: Rebecca Binns and Louisa Aveyard to prepare another update paper for the Board to be presented at a meeting later in the year, the date of which would be agreed as the situation developed.

6. Risk Management

Steve Meeks updated the Board on the organisation's risk management policy and procedure and how these had been adapted so that they were more compatible with Defra's revised risk strategy. Steve provided the Board with the refreshed Risk Register, which had been translated into the new template.

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The Board discussed how the Risk Registers for FE and FS could make best use of the new Defra template, while maintaining the core function of the register to identify where action was needed and would be best focused.

Action 8: Richard Greenhous and Simon Hodgson to work with **Steve Meeks** to establish appropriate connectivity between FS and FE risk management procedures and the new template-compliant corporate risk register which would be considered by the England National Committee, the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and England Executive Board and provided to Defra on a regular basis.

7. Apprenticeship levy readiness

Steve Meeks and Mike Seddon provided the Board with a short briefing note, highlighting the organisation's proposed strategy for implementing the organisation's responsibilities under the Apprenticeship Levy. This included strategies for overcoming the key issues of Human Resources preparations; making the necessary applications to become registered under the scheme and making existing and future apprenticeships fit with apprenticeship standards, and potentially developing a new standard for foresters/woodland officers.

The Board discussed the impact the new scheme would have on workforce planning, taking into account anticipated staffing levels and attrition rates from apprenticeships.

The Board agreed the next steps as outlined in the note.

8. Any other business

WIG membership - The Board discussed the merits and costs associated with joining the Whitehall and Industry Group membership, and agreed that the Forestry Commission should join the WIG.

Action 9: Ian Gambles to arrange for FC sign-up to WIG. **Jo Ridgway** to consider how best to promote cost-effective take-up of staff development programmes offered through WIG.

GiB membership - Richard Greenhous updated the Board on the current position of key leadership posts within the 'Grown In Britain' partnership.

Action 10: Simon Hodgson to report to a future EEB KiT meeting on the progress of Grown In Britain discussions so that the FC's position could be considered further.

Ian Gambles closed the meeting.

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