

**THE FORESTRY COMMISSION ENGLAND EXECUTIVE BOARD
MINUTES OF THE 109TH MEETING
Conference Room, National Office, Bristol
06 July 2017**

Attendees:

Rebecca Binns
Ian Gambles
Richard Greenhous
Simon Hodgson
Steve Meeks
Jo Ridgway
Stephanie Rhodes

Richard Barker – For item 5
Jenny King – Minute Secretary
Dorothy Russell – For AOB

Apologies:

Louisa Aveyard
Mike Seddon

1. Welcome

Ian Gambles opened the meeting.

2. Minutes and actions

The Board cleared the Minutes from the meeting on 24 April 2017 as a true and accurate record.

The Board agreed to carry forward one action from the previous meeting on a Defra group comms update.

Action 1: Rebecca Binns and Louisa Aveyard to prepare another update paper for the Board on Defra Group Comms to be presented at a meeting later in the year, the date of which would be agreed as the situation developed. Action carried over from previous meeting.

The Board discussed the latest draft of the Future Operating Model (FOM) and Ian Gambles confirmed the FOM would be sent to the minister as a submission before the 20 July.

Action 2: Ian Gambles asked for any further feedback on the draft submission and FOM circulated to EEB members to be returned by 10 July.

Steve Meeks confirmed he had completed the action to model the financial and staffing implications of the FOM and had shared this with Ian Gambles. Ian and Steve confirmed the new governance arrangements under the FOM would not have significant cost implications.

Simon Hodgson provided an update to the board on recent developments with Grown in Britain following its Board meeting on 05 July. Simon summarised a

number of initiatives and improved Public Relations support that have contributed to Grown in Britain making significant progress since the last EEB update.

Steve Meeks referenced the note sent to EEB members on 05 July regarding progress with the apprenticeship levy scheme. Steve reported that a strategy was being developed and an update would be provided to the October meeting or sooner if required. Ian Gambles highlighted the importance of developing this strategy in good time to ensure the business was prepared to make best use of the scheme. Jo Ridgway confirmed that when Dorothy Russell joined the meeting for item 6 that she would also provide an update.

3. Finance Report

The Board noted the information presented in the paper produced by Steve Meeks.

The Board discussed the projected underspend as a result of the lower than anticipated uptake of the Woodland Creation Fund (WCF). Steve reported that he would attempt to re-profile the capital spend across the life of the Fund. The Board noted that it was unlikely the money could be used this financial year. The Board discussed ways in which FEE might be able to utilise funds currently allocated to the WCF to aid with planting costs. The Board agreed a good value approach would be required.

The Board noted the revised timetable for laying the Annual Report and Accounts in the House of Commons library.

The Board discussed business planning and the anticipated pressures for savings which would come from the Natural Environment and Rural Systems working groups. Ian Gambles and Steve Meeks confirmed they would mitigate these as much as possible.

The Board discussed developments with FCE's internal audit provision from the Government Internal Audit Agency (GIAA) and the risks associated with not having a Head of Internal Audit in post. The Board agreed that this issue would need to be resolved before the next ARAC meeting.

Action 3: Ian Gambles and Simon Hodgson to write to Nathan Paget at the end of July if no progress has been made towards recruiting a GIAA Forestry Commission Head of Internal Audit and an internal audit team to deliver the audit plan.

4. Review Terms of Reference

The Board reviewed and endorsed the revised Terms of Reference that Ian Gambles had produced as a result of the discussions held in the April 2017 Board meeting and in the lead up to the July meeting. It was acknowledged that the Head of Communications was no longer a formal member of the EEB, but would attend the meetings for relevant items.

The Board discussed the need to set out Terms of Reference for each of the Boards set out in the FOM to ensure clarity of remit, consistency and good governance. The Board discussed the need to engage with Trade Unions appropriately as the FOM developed.

5. Information Security

The Board welcomed Richard Barker to the meeting and thanked him for his Paper on Information Security.

The board endorsed the updated FC wide Data Protection Policy, to be further revised at a later date to ensure compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Action 4: Richard Barker to bring an updated Data Protection Policy to the EEB before May 2018 in order to approve a further revision to the Policy to ensure compliance with the GDPR.

The Board approved of the country-focused approach to staff communication regarding Information Security that had been proposed in the Paper, as discussed at the Information Security Management Forum (ISMF).

The Board agreed the importance of preparation for the GDPR. The Board discussed the importance of adequate training, communications to staff, and senior manager sign up to complement the work detailed in the paper. The Board agreed the need for a formal project to provide structure and resource to complete the preparation steps outlined in the paper and wider work being undertaken to implement a records management system for the organisation. Jo Ridgway requested HR representation on the project board.

Action 5: Richard Barker to establish a formal project and project board for GDPR readiness and post-devolution information management and to provide an update at the next EEB.

6. Any other business

The Board welcomed Dorothy Russell to the meeting and discussed the recent workforce planning paper she had presented to the Forest Enterprise Management Board. Dorothy stated that the paper would be taken to the England National Committee (ENC) in July, and the FS Senior Managers' meeting in September. The Board noted the importance of a flexible FC workforce plan to reflect the changing market and attitudes to work.

The Board returned to the earlier discussion on the apprenticeship levy scheme and Dorothy Russell updated the Board on the progress of the strategy to recover funding through the scheme as discussed earlier in the meeting.

Ian Gambles closed the meeting.