

Forest Research Executive Board Meeting – 13 November 2007 - NRS

Present:

Peter Freer-Smith (Chair)	Ken Charles
Xanthe Christophers	Janet Dutch
Hugh Evans	Wilma Harper
Bill Mason	Helen McKay
Alison Melvin (AKM),	Andy Moffat
Chris Quine	

Apologies: Tony Cornwell

Copies to: Liz Holmes, Head of Internal Audit
Ros Bull, Secretary to the Chairman

In attendance: James Ogilvie attended for Item 3 & Norrie Craig attended for Item 7

Agenda Item 1 – Minutes of last meeting and matters arising

1. Minutes of last meeting were accepted.
2. Customer satisfaction. More work is required in this area, discussions will be held with James Pendlebury this afternoon and a paper will be presented to FREB early in 2008.
Action: PFS
3. Business Development Plan, PFS, AM, AKM are working on this. AKM's contract database needs to be up-to-date. PFS, TC, AKM to meet to discuss.
Action: PFS, AKM, TC, AM
4. HE has had a productive meeting with Clive Thomas regarding FR increasing its presence in Wales. HE to circulate his draft paper for the Welsh National Committee to FREB, and then to prepare a trawl for the Head of the Unit which reflects any NCW views.
Action: HE
5. AKM to prepare a paper to be presented at the December FREB meeting detailing IP Steering Group progress.
Action: AKM

Agenda Item 2 – Feedback from GB EB and update on implementation of the FR Development Strategy

6. PFS gave feedback from GB EB including:-
 - Recruitments (a draft job specification and advertisement for FR's CEO is being prepared with recruitment likely to start in the New Year. Recruitments for Director Wales, FC's Head of Procurement and a Diversity Manager are also underway).
 - Greenerways. A formal project and Project Board is being established to achieve ISO 14001 (Environmental Management Standard). Need for FREB to receive feedback from this Board and that a regular reporting cycle is established. Steve Lee to be invited to brief FREB.
Action: XC
 - An update on FR's progress in implementation of the FR Development Strategy, against the 07/08 KPIs and in delivery of this year's programme of research, surveys and advice was given to GBEB by PFS which was well received.

7. PFS, CQ, AM, AKM, TC to meet and 1) plan for the 08/09 Corporate Plan, 2) discuss whether FR needs a formal project team and Project Manager to lead the changes necessary to ensure the success of our Development Strategy and 3) to check over this year's Corporate Plan and the changes within the Development Strategy. The contents of the 08/09 FR Corporate and Business Plan will be presented to the December FREB. The plan is required for the GB EB in February 2008.

Action: PFS, CQ, AM, AKM, TC

Agenda Item 3 – Progress with the Review of Inventory and Production Forecast

8. James Ogilvie introduced this item and updated FREB on progress.
- Project Board is meeting on 15 November to look at a number of alternatives and different scenarios associated with the alternatives.
 - FR will comment corporately when the range of different scenarios is known (next 2 to 3 weeks). Comments will be channelled through HM.
 - There is a section in E-Connect on the Inventory Review with relevant papers available to staff.
 - FR had concerns with the Unit being set up as it was described in the Forshaw Report and discussed difficulties in defining the functions/purpose of the Unit. The fundamental issue being that FC staff should not need to be in a single Unit in order to work together effectively on jobs like the production forecast.

Agenda Item 4 – Finance Working Group Recommendations

9. Three of the main recommendations arising from the review were accepted with an implementation date of 1 April 2008:-
- Staff payroll costs and overheads be separately identified standard charging structures and be disclosed to FC and external customers.
 - Cross charging within FR should be made at actual cost rather than full economic costs.
 - For internal cross charging the agreed prices for specified work packages should be fixed regardless of cost unless otherwise agreed by both customer and provider.
10. It was accepted that there may be some difficulties in moving to the new procedure, PFS will discuss this with TC. **Action: PFS, TC**
11. The new Head of Finance will be asked to consider the apparent discrepancy between FR charge rates and those of the wider FC especially in the higher pay bands and to advise CEO/FREB of action needed. **Action: BM**

Agenda Item 5 – Divisional Reports

12. Divisional Reports will appear on the Intranet.
13. AJM as QA 'Champion' will present a QA report to FREB once the Audit Review report on QA is received. **Action: AM**
14. AJM will circulate a paper to FREB describing how bids for funding to the Programme Advisory Groups are to be managed. **Action: AM**

15. PFS requested that HoDs give XC information in their reports (under 'highlights') that can be used for communication purposes. **Action: HoDs**
16. CQ reported that there is potential for setting up a Highlands Forestry Research Centre. CQ/BM invited FREB to let them have views on such an initiative. **Action: FREB**
17. HE reported on the restructuring of the Forest Biocontrol nematode application project.
18. United Arab Emirates, FR needs to respond to approach. HE to e-mail specification to FREB. FREB to respond quickly. AKM to ensure this is progressed. **Action: HE, HoDs, AKM**
19. JD/AM to discuss TSU paper on Nurseries. FREB to be copied into correspondence. Nursery User Groups to continue to function. **Action: AM, JD**

Agenda Item 6 – Finance

20. PFS presented this paper in the absence of TC. The forecast for 2007/08 indicates a net deficit which takes account of the reduction in funding from CFS. **Noted**
21. HoDs to update forecasts, particularly salary figures in order to bring the overall budget back on target in time for December FREB. Additional measures will be required if this update of salary forecasts does not bring the FR budget back into line. **Action: HoDs**
22. Some capital money is still available. **Noted**
23. The 2008/09 planning cycle will be soon underway. There is a preference to work with a single divisional planning template which needs to accommodate the three recommendations agreed today (see item 9). PFS to discuss with TC regarding Divisional Office Managers getting together with a couple of Project Leaders to proceed on a common basis, with TC's guidance. **Action: PFS, TC**

Agenda Item 7 – FC's IT Strategy

24. Norrie Craig Interim Director, BSD attended for this item. He identified the purpose, business drivers, policies, mission, vision, principles, key themes, alignment and governance of the draft Information Systems Strategy. Detailed, draft papers will be sent to FREB members which can be passed on to staff who are welcome to make comments to Norrie. **Noted**

Agenda Item 8 – Staffing

25. KC presented his paper which indicated a forecast staffing for 2007/08 of 269 against a planned figure of 270 (FTE). **Noted**
26. The first of the Essential Skills for Managers courses was well received. Fourteen companies have bid against the tender for PRINCE2 training. The bids are being evaluated. **Noted**
27. Research Promotion Boards have been announced for 11/12 February. **Noted**

Date of Next Meeting – 13 December 2007 at Alice Holt