



Minutes of the 159<sup>th</sup> meeting of the **safefood** Advisory Board  
Held on Thursday, 25 August 2022 at 10:30am  
Airfield Estate, Dublin

**PRESENT:**

- Dr Eddie Rooney (ER) (Chair)
- Dr Sinead McCarthy (SMcC)
- Dr Kenneth McKenzie (KMck)
- Prof Maeve Henchion (MH)
- Mr Alex Attwood (AA) (Joined 11:03) (joined remotely)
- Ms Teresa Canavan (TC) (Joined 11:03)
- Prof Elizabeth Keane (EK)
- Ms Irene Collins (IC)

**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 Charmaine McGowan, Scientific Officer (CMcG)
- Ms Alison Dries (AD) Secretariat
- Ms Aoife O'Reilly, Digital Manager **safefood**

**APOLOGIES:**

- Mr Damien McCallion (DMcC) (Vice-Chair)
- Mr Alan Lewis (AL)

## 1. Introduction and apologies

**Noted:** The Chair welcomed members of the Advisory Board to the meeting held in Airfield Estate Dublin and thanked the staff at the venue 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, 16 June.

**Proposed:** MH

**Seconded:** IC

## 4. Matters arising from the minutes

**Noted:** No matters were arising.

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

**Noted:** EK gave a brief update from the Audit and Risk Committee meeting which took place at the end of July 2022

- EK thanked PF for her assistance to the ARC in the absence of the Corporate Operations Manager.
- As set out in the paper circulated to Board members, the ARC has concerns around the following high risks: long-term vacancies and associated pressures for **safefood** staff, the absence of the North South Ministerial Council meetings to approve the appointment of the CEO and other **safefood** requests.
- The ARC recommended the Advisory Board have regular sight of the Risk Register, especially due to the listing of significant risks recently. A cover paper and the risk register were circulated to all Board members prior to the meeting.
- The Director of Corporate Operations advised that the recommendations relating to **safefood**'s Business Continuity planning, arising from the internal audit, have been significantly progressed and ongoing management of the BCP now resides with the ICT Manager.
- The Equality Action Plan 2023-2025 is currently in draft format, **safefood** hopes to publish the Plan in early 2023 following a consultation process.
- Dr Aileen McGloin, Director of Nutrition with **safefood** attended the ARC meeting and presented the work of the directorate with a particular focus on food poverty and the cost-of-living crisis.
- There were minor findings for the Comptroller and Auditors General's (C&AG) report relating to setting of targets to enhance the evaluation of campaigns and **safefood**'s reallocation of budget to hand-washing campaigns during the year. The ARC expressed satisfaction in **safefood**'s approach to these matters.
- The Chair thanked EK for the comprehensive feedback from the ARC meeting.

## 6. Chief Executive Officers report

**Noted:** The Chief Executive Officer's report detailed **safefood**'s activity since the last Advisory Board meeting on 16 June. 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:** PF updated on the following Corporate Operations matters

- the lease for the Dublin office in Abbey Street expired at the end of 2021. Following engagement with the landlord, **safefood** has remained in situ for the moment as the landlord considers terms for offering a new lease. In tandem, **safefood** is exploring the possibility of sharing Dublin office space with another North South Body which has spare space.
- **safefood**'s blended working policy was noted in the CEO report. Board members enquired about the take-up of the policy and the knock-on requirement this may have for the current office space. PF informed that since **safefood** offered staff the opportunity to

apply for a blended working pattern in June, only one staff member has not applied. As all staff are required to attend on specific days there is no reduction in office space required by **safefood**.

- the senior management team welcomed Mr Mark Hanniffy from the Southern NSMC Joint Secretariat to **safefood**'s Cork office on 8 July. The CEO had a further separate meeting with Mr Hanniffy where they discussed specific **safefood** challenges and other common issues experienced by North/South bodies.
- following input received from **safefood** management and the Advisory Board, the CEO is progressing the development of the new Corporate Plan. It is expected that a first draft of this plan will be available in September/October.
- The CEO met with both Sponsor Departments in Belfast on 26 June and discussed the new draft Financial Memorandum which the Sponsor Departments are keen to put in place. Subsequently, the CEO agreed final drafting amendments to the new Financial Memorandum and it is expected that it will come into operation on 1 September. A schedule of actions required of **safefood** has been drafted to implement the new FM. PF advised that some of these are assigned for the attention of the Corporate Operations Manager to progress on her return from extended leave.

**Noted:** FG informed of the following updates in Communications

- 200k from Healthy Ireland's budget has been secured for the START campaign.
- **safefood** now has an additional vacancy to those listed in the CEO report. The Events Executive resigned from the post in early August.
- An amendment to the Official Languages Act 2003 will result in the following changes to **safefood**
  - o at least 20 per cent of any advertising placed by the body in any year shall be in the Irish language.
  - o at least 5 per cent of any money expended by the body on advertising in any year shall be used to place advertising in the Irish language through Irish language media"

This may result in additional expenditure required in the marketing area and given there are few Irish media outlets, potential for over-saturation of **safefood**'s advertisements in these outlets.

- Significant and sustained earned media coverage was secured during June and July for two research reports as well as the meat thermometer campaign. The Nutrition report "Public acceptability of policies to address obesity" had a total estimated reach of more than 5m adults on the island. Media coverage highlights included Newstalk, RTE Radio One, BBC Breakfast TV, Downtown Radio, the Irish Examiner, Daily Star and Irish News. Broadcast coverage alone accounted for a reach more than 2m adults. The report on "The Socio-Economic cost of food hypersensitivity on the island of Ireland" also performed strongly, earning a total audience reach approaching 4.3m adults. Highlights included Newstalk, RTE Radio One, BBC TV News, BBC Radio Ulster, U105, the Irish Times, Daily Mail, Belfast Telegraph and Irish News.

While the meat thermometer campaign is still ongoing, media coverage reach is nearing 2.5m adults with notable coverage secured on Newstalk, Ireland AM (TV), Irish Mirror, Daily Mail and across broadcast and online news outlets.

**Noted:** CMcG informed of the following activity being undertaken by the Nutrition team.

- The final evaluation report for Transform Your Trolley 2021 was received. Twelve Healthy Living Centres delivered the programme across Northern Ireland, which reached 235 individuals. Evaluation of the programme showed a significant improvement from pre-to-post-programme regarding reading of more food labels, consuming more fruit and vegetables and preparing more homemade meals. Participants found the programme useful and at the end of the programme, 99% recognised **safefood** as a reliable source of information for healthy eating and food safety. This was an increase from the original 59% reflected at the beginning of the programme. Several recommendations were made for delivery of the 2022 programme which will now be incorporated into mainstream business plans. The Memorandum of Understanding for the Transform Your Trolley 2022 programme was signed by **safefood** and the Healthy Living Centre Alliance.
- The All-island Obesity Action Forum brought together experts to explore a range of policy approaches with the aim of addressing obesity and public attitudes towards such policies. Two hundred and two people registered to attend the event, forty-one attended in person and one hundred and fifteen people attended online. ER Chaired the event and informed feedback on **safefood** was very positive and congratulated all involved. IC and TC seconded these comments and asked **safefood** colleagues present at the meeting to pass on the positive feedback to staff involved. The next workshop due to take place in November will focus on weight stigma.
- The All-island Food Poverty Network will take place on 20 September. An invitation was sent to Board members.

## 9. Financial report

**Noted:** PF presented the financial report for the six months, January to June 2022. Unfortunately, due to staffing shortages, the July Management Accounts were not available prior to the meeting. **safefood's** progress compares well with progress in the same period in 2021. Currently **safefood** is slightly under budget, however, is on track to spend its full allocation by the year end.

## 10. Presentations

**Noted:** Aoife O'Reilly from the Marketing and Communications directorate in **safefood** gave a presentation titled 'How **safefood** is expanding its reach' which is summarised below:

- Ecosystem – how the various digital/media channels reach and influence the public
- Website – How various tools and procedures such as search engine optimisation, accessibility, analytics, data protection, display ads and social ads drive traffic to the website. Visitors to the **safefood** website come from various sources including direct traffic (typing in **safefood** to the web address) social ads and paid partnerships. **safefood** operates a mobile first website, meaning all content created must be viewable also on mobile phones.
- Social media – **safefood** creates ads with the end audience in mind. Content must be entertaining, maybe humours, authentic, relatable, and trustworthy.
- Video – is used to present visual language
- Podcasts – help **safefood** present more in-depth information.

**Noted:** The Chair thanked Aoife for her informative presentation and opened to the floor for questions.

**Noted:** The Chair welcomed Claire McEvilly, CEO of Airfield Estate Dublin to the meeting and thanked her for hosting **safe food** and taking the time to present an overview of the Estate and offer Board members a tour after the meeting has closed. Airfield Estates mission is 'To inspire and enable people to make better food choices because even small changes can be better for health, better value for money and better for the environment' which nicely sums up the work of Airfield.

## 11. Meeting of Advisory Board members – without Executive present

**Noted:** The Board met without the Executive present.

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

**Noted:** The Chair advised that the time allocated for this meeting at the October Advisory Board should be extended to allow for discussion between Advisory Board members and the Chief Executive.

**Date of next meeting:** Thursday, 20 October 2022