

HARPER ADAMS UNIVERSITY

Minutes of the meeting of the Farm Strategy Committee held on 11 October 2017 at 2 pm in the Haydock Room.

Present:	Dr D Llewellyn Mr S Kirby Mr R Cooper Miss G Smith	Chairman
In attendance:	Dr C E Baxter Mrs S Furniss	Clerk to the Governors
Apologies:	Mrs C Bailey Mr M Roach Dr J Donaldson Mr C Ellis Prof P Mills Dr A Wilcox	

Members were reminded to update their entry in the Register of Interests as necessary.

17/01 Minutes

Approved: the minutes of the Farm Strategy Committee Meeting held on 24 May 2017 (16/21-16/29).

17/02 Matters Arising

Received: a report from the University Secretary.

- Noted:
- i) that work to develop farm enterprise costing models had progressed since the last meeting of the Committee, although it was recognised that further work was still needed and this was in hand. Current work was focusing on how to allocate slurry and other costs between the various enterprises. Expenses that attract VAT have already been reviewed and overheads calculated based on income. The model also included an assessment of machinery costs based on a formula relating to machine usage. Forage and fertiliser costs had been allocated based on usage. It was hoped to have a final model put in place by December 2017 with a report to the February 2018 meeting of the Committee. In discussion, members acknowledged that the model will always have certain elements that are broad estimates as it would not be appropriate or possible to allocate all costs specifically, given the integrated nature of the farm and the role that it plays in the broader teaching and research areas of the University's work; **SF/SK**
 - ii) that gatekeeper software may be available to the farm as part of ongoing discussions with John Deere. The University Secretary and University Solicitor had supported the Farm Manager in discussions with John Deere and feedback was currently awaited from their representative. In the meantime, the Farm Manager would make contact to ask for a progress report with respect to provision of gatekeeper software; **SK**
 - iii) that a new readership in beef production, partly supported by ABP, had recently been advertised and a candidate appointed. This would help to support the work the university was undertaking as part of the CIEL consortium. The changes to the beef unit were currently in hand, funded by CIEL;

- iv) that Mr Hooper has recently provided an article to ' Pig World' and other publications. The article focused in particular on ways to reduce the use of antimicrobials. Feedback was currently awaited;
- v) that arrangements for new cattle for the Agri-Epi development had been agreed.

17/03 Terms of Reference

Noted: the Terms of Reference of the Committee for 2017/18 and that members had no comments or suggestions for amendments.

17/04 Risk Management

Considered: i) a report from the University Secretary on risk items monitored by the Committee.

Noted: i) that recruitment of staff with farm livestock skills and other skills including arable/crop experience, was becoming increasingly difficult. It was agreed that the risk related to failure to have access to adequate farmland had been addressed, by the decision to purchase additional agricultural land and therefore it would be appropriate to replace this particular risk with one related to the ability to recruit and retain appropriately trained and skilled staff;

ii) that Mr Hooper had put together proposals around centralisation of staff and it was suggested that it would be useful to consider these with the Head of Human Resources. Members also noted that it would be important to take into account the full package of benefits that was offered by the University, including pension and holiday arrangements, when comparing remuneration being offered in the private sector.

Agreed: that RH, GS and SK would arrange to meet with EV to discuss staffing challenges and possible solutions. **SK/RH/GS**

17/05 Farm Management Accounts (Grass and Arable)

Considered: i) the Farm Management accounts (Grass and Arable) for the period to 31 August 2017;

ii) a progress report on the annual operating plans for the University Farm.

Noted: i) that the farm had made an overall contribution of £214k at year end. Costs had been managed well and there has been an opportunity to make a gain relating to machinery sales. Milk sales had been slightly under budget due to price and volume issues. However, crop sales had been good. Members of the Committee welcomed the detailed notes provided and confirmed that these continued to be useful;

ii) that cow numbers were increasing in the dairy and this had put some pressure on the herd and a reduction in output per cow had been identified, possibly due to overstocking. In part, additional animals had been retained in the hope that there would be an opportunity to start moving stock over to the new robotic dairy parlour. However, there had been issues with the project and a member of staff to manage the facility had yet to take up this new post. An advert was due to be placed shortly. The University Secretary would ask the Estates Department to liaise with the Farm Manager and the Vice- Chancellor, to ensure that they were fully aware of the latest position with regard to the construction and fitting out work;

- iii) that there continued to be challenges related to higher cell counts, although overall fertility remained strong. Due to cell issues, the premium on milk hygiene had been affected and therefore close attention was being paid to this area. There had also been challenges related to forecasting accuracy, due to the uncertainty of when the new robotic milking system would come on stream;
- iv) that forage harvesting had resulted in some good yields;
- v) that the farm sheep flock continued to perform well.

17/06 Pig Unit

- Considered:
- i) the Pig Unit accounts for the period to 31 August 2017;
 - ii) a pig unit update;
 - iii) a progress report on the annual operating plan for the Pig Unit.

- Noted:
- i) that costs against budget were up on repairs and renewals, while other Costs were being carefully managed and pig meat prices were more positive. The overall performance therefore remained on track. It was particularly pleasing that the pig unit had made an overall net contribution of £171,836 for the full year, versus a budgeted contribution of £15,515. The Committee expressed its thanks to Mr Hooper and his team;
 - ii) that the development of replacement units had been affected by subcontractor issues. The Estates team were working with RH to ensure that new quotes were obtained, so that the work could progress;
 - iii) that the number of pigs in the new accommodation would remain the same, although space would be increased. The plans had been shared with the new Home Office Inspector, who had indicated that she was content. Plans were also being managed for stocking and RH remained reasonably optimistic that the revised timetable would work, provided the subcontractor issues were resolved in time;
 - iv) that two new PhD proposals had been put forward following a recent AHDB call.

Agreed: that signs explaining the reason for the work on the pig unit would be put in place for the new Open Day. RH would discuss with the Marketing Team.

RH

17/07 Animal Production Welfare and Veterinary Science/Crop and Environmental Science Departments - Operating Plans 2017/17

Received: a progress report on the Annual Operating Plans for the APWVS Sheep Unit, APWVS Beef Unit and CERC.

- Noted:
- i) that on her return from maternity leave, Nicola Naylor would be taking over responsibility for the sheep flock. In the meantime the report had been prepared by Mr Ellis as Head of Department. The operating plan continued to be progressed;
 - ii) that the operating plans of the beef unit confirmed that actions were in hand and that progress was appropriate;
 - iii) that CERC were progressing contacts with DLF, with a view to securing sponsorship for seed for the trial plots. It was understood that the sponsorship may be for 30 varieties of different birds and bee mixes;.

iv) that the rest of the CERC operating plan had continued as anticipated.

17/08 **Research Projects**

Noted: i) that the Deputy Vice Chancellor had not been able to attend the meeting.

Agreed: i) to ask that the Vice Chancellor circulate a written report to the Committee and continue to provide a brief written note if he was able to attend meetings in future. **PRM**

17/09 **Any Other Business**

No matters were raised.

17/10 **Date of Next Meeting:** 1 February 2018