

## HARPER ADAMS UNIVERSITY

### Minutes of the meeting of the Farm Strategy Committee held on 13 June 2018 at 10.30 in the Boardroom.

<b>Present:</b>	Dr D Llewellyn Mr S Kirby Dr J Donaldson Mr R Hooper Prof Peter Mills	Chairman
<b>In attendance:</b>	Dr C E Baxter Mrs S Furniss Mrs C Mason	Clerk to the Governors Minute Secretary
<b>Apologies:</b>	Mr C Ellis Mrs C Snell Mr M Roach Dr A Wilcox Mrs Rosie Reeves Mrs G Smith	

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

#### 17/20 Minutes

Approved: the minutes of the Farm Strategy Committee Meeting held on 1 February 2018 (17/11/17/119)

#### 17/21 Matters Arising

Received: a report from the University Secretary.

- Noted:
- i) that an email had been received the previous evening from John Deere Germany, together with a final draft of an agreement to collaborate on a precision farming project. It was agreed that before a reply could be sent, resolution of the issue with Gatekeeper software was needed. The Vice-Chancellor would be having discussions with Farmers' Weekly to discuss Gatekeeper options; **SK/DGL**
  - ii) that the issues relating to the attraction and retention of farm staff continued to be a concern with respect to attracting the right calibre of candidates and being competitive with the market in terms of the whole package on offer, as accommodation is typically provided in the livestock sector. The Vice-Chancellor advised that steps are being taken to address the issue with a new package currently being tested in the marketplace. Discussions had also taken place with the Careers team to ask them to proactively encourage those graduates to apply who do not yet have jobs;
  - iii) that a poster regarding the trial on porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome had been displayed at the European Health symposium. RH was asked to provide information to Marketing for the website and to explore using this information in the farming press; **RH**
  - iv) that IT are progressing enhanced delivery of the Farm Information System;

- v) that the Deputy Vice-Chancellor would communicate with the new professors of Agri-tech Economics to ensure they are briefed about the farm and introduced to the Farm Manager; **PRM**

## 17/22 Risk Management

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

Noted: that staffing related risks remained the key area for concern and steps were in hand to try and address the issue. Other risks continued to be actively managed.

## 17/23 Farm Management Accounts (Grass and Arable)

Considered:

- i) the Farm Management accounts (Grass and Arable) for the period to 30 April 2018;
- ii) a progress report on the Annual Operating Plans for the University Farm: Dairy Unit, Young Stock/Sheep and Arable Enterprises.

Noted:

- i) that the Farm had made an overall net contribution of £181,539 for the year to date to April 2018, versus a budgeted contribution for the year to date of £72,387, giving a favourable variance of £109,153. Income had been £82k below budget, largely due to milk sales being £76k below budget. A slightly higher average price had been achieved during the financial year to date, however production volumes were behind budget;
- ii) that forecasts had been completed, indicating that the farm as a whole would achieve the budgeted figures;
- iii) that the overall stock adjustment to date had yielded a stock increase of £138k;
- iv) that the staff costs remained below budget as a result of staff shortages;
- v) that while stocks had not been valued, the enterprise costing method was a helpful indicator and was welcomed by members;
- vi) that the dairy progress report outlined the impact of the Agri-Epi dairy scheme, with delays continuing to have an effect. Overstocking of dairy cattle had been problematic and had health consequences for the herd which were being actively managed;
- vii) that the dairy staff had coped well with a challenging 12 months;
- viii) that a typographical error was in one of the finance tables. This would be amended; **SF**
- ix) the current TB status, whereby the farm was currently under restrictions, as were many local farms. Further tests were due to be carried out at the beginning of July;
- x) that in relation to arable enterprises, all of last year's stock had been sold, with prices achieved greater than had been budgeted. The arable contribution for the current year was not yet fully reflected in the enterprise summary to 30 April 2018 as the standing crop was shown at the lower of costs and net realistic value. The contribution from the purchase of additional land would be realised when the crops are sold;
- xi) that it had not yet been possible to fully forecast the position with regard to sheep by year end. This would be reported at the next meeting. **SF**

Agreed:

that the strategy for the main dairy herd would be that 380 cows should be the maximum herd size.

DRAFT

17/24 **Pig Unit**

- Considered:
- i) the Pig Unit accounts for the period to 30 April 2018;
  - ii) a Pig Unit update;
  - iii) a progress report on the annual operating plan for the Pig Unit.
- Noted:
- i) that the Pig Unit accounts to 30 April 2018 show a net loss of £21,247 for the first nine months, versus a budgeted loss of £45,755, giving a favourable variance of £24,508;
  - ii) that it had been forecast that the income target will be exceeded by the year end, reflected by an adjustment of £39,708;
  - iii) that stock was £77k below budget as a result of changes in stock volume against budget. There had been a change to the forecasted stock numbers, with closing stock expected to finish in line with the forecast at the end of the year;
  - iv) that de-stocking of the current buildings had highlighted the need for a number of essential repairs which had resulted in an adjustment in the reforecast for additional spend of £54k, somewhat offset by a £33k saving in feedstuff. The de-stocking, which had last been carried out 20 years ago, went well, with herd immunity now improving as advised by the vets;
  - v) that the Deputy Vice-Chancellor queried whether the health issues associated with de-stocking should be documented and suggested there could be a useful case study. AHDB is interested in gilt data, may also be interested in stock/de-stock data;
  - vi) that small numbers of live pigs had been supplied into the local market, with high prices achieved;
  - vii) that there was more work being done to reduce antimicrobial use and the Pig Unit's approach would be useful for another industry case study.
- Agreed: that the possibility of using de-stock and re-stock data would be explored, with a report on progress over the summer. **RH**

17/25 **Animal Production Welfare and Veterinary Science/Crop and Environmental Science Departments - Operating Plans 2017/18**

- Received: a progress report on the Annual Operating Plans for the APWVS Sheep Unit, APWVS Beef Unit and CERC.
- Noted:
- i) that the Sheep Unit had been well used by students, although activity by research students had decreased recently;
  - ii) that a higher number of students would be returning from placements in the Autumn term, which would result in pressure on buildings. In discussion, members acknowledged there was a lack of both funding and space for additional buildings;
  - iii) that a new sheep group had been set up, led by John Donaldson and Nicky Naylor;
  - iv) that Yuri Montanholi and Simon Marsh were working together on beef unit plans and activities. Further publications were planned;

- v) that the number of research grants and contracts secured by CERC had fallen. PRM would discuss this with Andy Wilcox and Grace Smith.

**PRM**

Agreed: that a proposal, including consideration of alternative locations and funding sources for sheep work, should be presented to the Committee in October 2018. **JD/CAE**

**17/26 Research Projects**

Received: an oral report from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor on new/current research projects involving the Farm.

Noted: that colleagues had recently secured £1.1m for research. Most of the projects were unlikely to impact on the University Farm.

**17/27 Any Other Business**

Noted: that with regard to farm staff recruitment issues, a graduate scheme was suggested. Ideas included securing four trainees who could share a house and who would rotate to spend six months in each area, including each of the farm enterprises and the units run by the Animals Department. The scheme could be aimed at those considering a farm career and who needed experience to help them decide on their final career choice. The mix of enterprises offered at Harper Adams could be very attractive.

Agreed: that a group would be created to consider a graduate training scheme with the aim of creating staff who were highly employable, with qualifications and practical skills. Mr Bailey offered to be involved. Members also noted it was vital to have representation from relevant course teams. The group would be drawn together over the summer and would include SK, RH, TP and the Head of Careers. Mr Bailey would be kept informed and invited to comment as ideas emerged. **DGL/SK/RH**

**17/19 Date of Next Meeting:** 11 October 2018 at 11.00am