

HARPER ADAMS UNIVERSITY

Minutes of the meeting of the Farm Strategy Committee held on 11 October 2018 at 10.00 in the Temperton Room.

Present:	Dr D Llewellyn Mr S Kirby Dr J Donaldson Mr R Hooper Prof Peter Mills Mr Carwyn Ellis Mrs Christine Snell	Chairman
In attendance:	Dr C E Baxter Mrs S Furniss Miss Rosie Reeves Mrs S Vinall	Clerk to the Governors Minute Secretary
Apologies:	Mr M Roach Dr A Wilcox Mrs G Milburn Mr Colin Bailey Mrs Liz Furey	

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

18/01 Minutes

Approved: the minutes of the Farm Strategy Committee Meeting held on 13 June 2018 (17/20/17/28)

18/02 Matters Arising

Received: a report from the University Secretary.

- Noted:
- i) that further progress had been made with John Deere over the summer. A proposed project agreement had been received for comments;
SK
 - ii) that Richard Hooper had published an article on PRRS vaccinations in the farming press with further follow-up articles planned in six months. A meeting was to be arranged with Marketing to discuss engagement with a wider range of cover;
RH/SP
 - iii) that a meeting between the Farm Manager and the new Agri-Tech Professors had been arranged;
 - iv) that the typographical error in the Finance tables presented in June 2018 had been corrected;
 - v) that an update on the Pig Unit de-stock/restock was included in the Pig Unit update later on the agenda;
 - vi) that it had been confirmed that the current position regarding research grants secured by CERC had improved significantly since last year. Costing implications had also been explained to staff involved in bids;

- vii) that discussions had taken place about a possible plan to consolidate sheep into one flock with a single breed type. In discussion it was agreed that diversity of University flock would be advantageous to support the planned Joint Vet School. It was agreed that further discussions were required to explore the implications and practicalities of the farm being involved in teaching, research and commercial activities currently supported by the Sheep unit managed by APWVS. If a single consolidated flock were to be created the implications needed careful and detailed discussion and agreement between all parties; **JD/CAE**

- viii) that a Graduate Trainee Programme for the farm was currently being considered by Maria Simpson and the Farm Manager. It was agreed that it would be beneficial to look at the salary and package offered and that a working group would be required to bring forward final proposals; **SK/DGL/CEB**

18/03 **Terms of Reference**

Agreed: the Terms of Reference subject to a minor change in membership to correct the nomenclature from “Management Accountant” to read “Farm Business Partner”.

18/04 **Risk Management**

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

Noted: that a badger cull was in operation east of the A41. It was understood that protesters had caused some disruption including leaving gates open and cutting fences. Further CCTV was planned for the farm. Dates would be confirmed; **CEB**

18/05 **Members Discussion on the Role of the Farm in Supporting the University’s Engagement with the Agriculture Bill**

Considered: the role of the Farm in supporting the University’s engagement with the Agriculture Bill.

A wide ranging discussion took place between members. Key points included: how to maintain recognition for agricultural production innovation as well as innovation in the wider food sector, how to support education, research and knowledge transfer activities across the University Farm, noting that the APWVS and CERC units would also be key. It was also recognised that these complex issues may benefit from simplification in the changing environment to ensure there is good co-operation and best use of resources across all departments at the University engaged in food production, whether livestock or crop orientated.

It was recognised that the University must not lose its valuable connections with the farming world and it was important to ensure that the Farm both demonstrated good practice and improved upon current practice.

Whilst it was recognised that the Farm did not run as a predominantly commercial enterprise, it was important to ensure it kept abreast of any shifts in consumer demand, particularly in the post-Brexit era. It was agreed that the shift could also be demonstrated by field visits to such units within the industry for teaching purposes.

It was agreed that it was of paramount importance to have the ‘Hands-Free Farm’ on University land so as not to dilute the University’s involvement in the project. However, Members agreed that this plan would bring its own challenges.

Members agreed that the Committee may need to be open to the possibility of not making a significant surplus on Farm, APWVS & CERC at the cost of innovative research;

It was further agreed that staffing levels should ideally be higher than those in a commercial farm with staff highly trained and motivated in the areas of education, research and knowledge exchange. It was recognised that there may be the possibility of being able to source some services externally with a portfolio of companies to work 'smarter'.

It was agreed that hard facts and figures were required for review and analysis. Christine Snell agreed to be involved and Mark Roach would also be approached.

SK/DGL/CAE/AW

18/06 **Farm Management Accounts (Grass and Arable)**

Considered: i) the Farm Management accounts (Grass and Arable) for the period to 31st July 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 £7k for the year to date to 31 July 2018, versus a budgeted contribution for the year to date of £172k, giving an adverse variance of £165k. Income had been £71k below budget, largely due to milk sales being £111k below budget. A slightly higher average price had been achieved during the financial year to date, however production volumes were behind budget because of previous overstocking of the Dairy Unit;

ii) that forecasts had been completed, indicating that the farm as a whole would achieve its budgeted figures;

iii) that the overall stock adjustment to date had yielded a stock increase of £14,795k. This compares to an increase of £138k seen in the last quarterly stock take in April. The closing stock valuation was, therefore, a surprise and has adversely affected the overall university forecast by c.100k; In light of this, Sarah Furniss would contact Hall's Valuations to explore possible changes to the valuation system to avoid such fluctuations in value where possible;

SF

iv) that commercial other operating expenses were £8k adverse to budget for the year and adverse to the forecast by £62k due to a larger spend on fertiliser, contracting and repairs in the last month of the year;

v) that the overall cost to support teaching was adverse to budget by £34k mainly due to a larger proportion of wage and salary costs being set against the tuition accounts than those budgeted;

vi) that a report on the impact of the Agri-Epi Smart Dairy project would be circulated to enable members to appreciate the legacy problem through to 2018/19;

CAE/SF/SK

vii) that the Dairy had been successful in maintaining fertility levels despite a continuing trend of a decline with conception rates down 2% to 35% and the pregnancy rate down 18%. The exceptionally warm weather was understood to be a contributing factor to this;

viii) that it was recognised that staffing had been an ongoing issue in the Dairy

and a reliance on casual staff had had consequences on performance. The Farm Manager and the Vice-Chancellor would continue to discuss a management plan to address this; **DGL/SK**

- ix) that the culling rate had dropped slightly to 28% from 29% largely due to fertility, johnes and cell count issues. Lameness has improved with 94% of cows now sound;
- x) that cell counts continued to be an issue with a figure of 216 for September. The latest cell check report showed a much improved situation with fewer cows in the herd infected and a reduction in the number of fresh infections;
- xi) that production had dropped from 31.4 litres to 29.4 litres per cow. This was understood to be in part due to the low yielders being outside, high yielding cows moving to the Precision Dairy Unit and grazing grass being limited;
- xii) that the Precision Dairy Unit was currently producing 34 litres per cow per day with only a few incidences of mastitis. Further data on fertility in this unit would be available for the next report. **SK**

18/07 **Pig Unit**

- Considered:
- i) the Pig Unit accounts for the period to 31 July 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 31 July 2018 show a contribution of £33,568 for the full year versus a budgeted gain of £79,009 giving an adverse variance of £45,441;
 - ii) that income for the year had exceeded budget by £82k which was recognised as a substantial achievement during destocking and restocking;
 - iii) that stock was £11k ahead of budget as a result of increased stock numbers although the overall value of the stock had decreased during the year;
 - iv) that the new stock was high health status and there was therefore an increased initial vet and medicine cost whilst the stock bedded in;
 - v) that the Pig Unit was in receipt of a slurry management charge from the Farm of £39k which was higher than the budgeted £30k. The Pig Unit Manager was exploring options to dispose of slurry off site which may be less costly. **RH**
 - vi) that Capital spend on the Pig Unit was completed in March 2018 with a total cost of £225k against a budget of 3170K;
 - vii) that thanks were once again due to Richard Hooper and his team for their hard work during the destock/restocking.

18/08 **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 once again been well used by students for both teaching and research with production of meat for sale being a secondary consideration;

- ii) that production rates for the Sheep Unit had been 1.6 lambs per ewe against a target of 1.5;
- iii) that ewe mortality stood at 3.5% against a target of 5% with lamb mortality at 10.1% against a target of 15% which was pleasing;
- iv) that the average lamb sale price was £82.25 against a target of £55;
- v) that discussions were taking place between Yuri Montanholi and Emma Bleach regarding sourcing calves for an October 2018 calf trial;
- vi) that the Beef Unit had provided resources for 8 HRP students to date and been utilised for tutorials and short courses;
- vii) that four papers were to be offered to BSAS for the April 2019 meeting;
- viii) that CERC teaching plots had been moved to Crabtree due to poor soil conditions at the rear of CERC;

18/09 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 £233k for research. Most of the projects were unlikely to impact directly on the University Farm; **PRM**

Agreed: that the Farm Manager and Deputy Vice-Chancellor would agree the list of projects currently using farm resources.

18/10 Any Other Business

Noted: that the next Effectiveness Review was due for completion by July 2019. Members of the Farm Strategy Committee will be asked to complete a questionnaire in due course.

18/11 Date of Next Meeting: 7 February 2019 at 10.00am