

**Minutes of the Board meeting of the Health Research Board  
held on Friday, 17 February 2023 at Grattan House 67-72 Lower Mount Street,  
Dublin.**

**Present:** Prof B Hannigan (Chairperson)  
Dr S Barry  
Dr L Bishop  
Dr T Cunningham  
Prof S Donnelly  
Dr J Ling  
Dr T McWade  
Prof C Normand  
Dr C Saidlear

**Apologies:** Prof T Fahey

**In attendance:** Dr M O'Driscoll, Chief Executive Officer  
Ms C Cronin, Board Secretary and Head of Governance  
Dr P Clarke and Dr A Daly, International Cooperation, Evaluation & Targeted  
Programmes Unit attended for item 7.  
Mr D McMahon, McCann Fitzgerald, attended for item 8.  
Mr M Morgan, Director of Corporate Operations attended for items 8 and 12.  
Dr T Maguire, Director of Research Strategy and Funding, Dr C Gill, Targeted  
Programmes and Evaluation and Ms O Ward, Research and Innovation  
Infrastructures attended for items 9, 10, 11.  
Mr D Murphy, Finance Manager, attended for item 12.

---

**1. Conflict of Interest**

Prof Normand and Prof Fahey had declared conflicts of interest in relation to the matter of the TILDA waves 7-9 funding recommendation.

**2. Minutes of the previous meeting**

Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 9 December 2022 were approved.

### 3. Action points from previous meetings

There were no action points arising from the previous meeting and no matters arising.

### 4. CEO's Report

#### Sale of 73 Lower Baggot Street

The CEO informed the Board that the HRB's property at 73 Lower Baggot Street had been put on the market on 1 February 2023. It was agreed to prioritise the preparation of a business case seeking Department of Health approval for the investment of the sale proceeds in health research.

#### WHO and Fluoridation Guidelines

The Board congratulated the HRB Evidence Centre on the World Health Organization's Global Oral Health Network recommendation of the HRB's review titled "*Impact of community water fluoridation on systemic health excluding oral health. An evidence review*" to all countries considering community water fluoridation, as a reliable source examining the issue of CWF and systemic health outcomes.

#### Other matters

The CEO also reported on:

- HRB Budget and Business Plan 2023
- Data breach
- Impact 2030 Work Programme
- MOU with DoH
- NDRDI data to support Citizen's Assembly on Drugs
- Census of research nurses
- ECRIN Assembly
- Update on National Office for Research Ethics Committees
- HRB Media Coverage
- Awards made under delegated authority

### 5. Programme of work for the Board and listed conflicts of interest

The Board noted the programme of work for the remainder of 2023 and agreed to advise the Secretary of any changes required to the listed conflicts of interest.

### 6. HRB Service Plan 2022 – Status Report as of 31 December 2022

The Board noted the report on the status of HRB's Service Plan as at 31 December 2022 and **approved its submission to the Department of Health's** Research Services and Policy Unit as the final progress report on the annual Performance Delivery Agreement 2022.

## 7. Horizon Europe/EU4Health 2021-2027

Dr Clarke presented to the Board on Horizon Europe 2021 – 2027, and Dr Daly presented on EU4Health. It was noted that the role of the HRB in relation to European funding for health research included influencing the EU health research agenda, supporting Irish applicants and co-funding successful applications. It was agreed that the scope of involvement given the limited resources available to the HRB was a strategic matter to be addressed in the context of the evolving national structures and EU agendas.

## 8. HRB's National Research Ethics Committee National Office – Proposed Statutory Instrument

Mr Doug McMahon, McCann Fitzgerald presented a paper advising the Board on the implications for the HRB of the draft statutory instrument that has been prepared to amend SI 260/2021 to provide for the establishment of a National Office for National Research Ethics Committees for Clinical Investigations of Medical Devices (the “National Office for NRECs for Clinical Investigations”) and amend the statutory functions of the HRB. As Mr McMahon had attended the meeting on behalf of the McCann FitzGerald Partner who had prepared the paper, it was agreed that McCann Fitzgerald would revert at a later stage with answers to some of the Board's questions.

The Board expressed its concern at the piecemeal approach being taken to the development of legislation on National Research Ethics Committees and the ensuing ambiguity around the scope of the functions of the HRB and the role of the Board of the HRB.

Plans by the Department of Health to put forward a National Research Ethics Bill for consideration by the Oireachtas was discussed. It was noted that a progress had been made on the preparation of a Memorandum of Understanding between the HRB and the Department of Health in relation to the work of the HRB's National Office for National Research Ethics Committees.

## 9. New Scheme/Call Principles Papers

### PhD in Precision Medicine (Cancer Consortium)

The Board noted a paper setting out the high-level principles of a new initiative to be advanced under the auspices of the Ireland-Northern Ireland-National Cancer Institute and focused on Doctoral Training Programme in Precision Cancer Medicine. Dr Maguire outlined the benefits of previous iterations of this scheme in terms of expertise returning to the Island of Ireland.

**It was agreed that HRB staff should enter into formal discussions with Northern Ireland's Health and Social Care Trust Public Health Agency (<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/>) R&D Division.** It was noted that, subject to Northern Ireland's confirmation of willingness to partner with the HRB, a further paper would be presented to the Board on the Doctoral Training Programme in Precision Cancer Medicine.

## 10. Approval to issue call

### Patient Safety Research Network

**The Board approved a call for a Patient Safety Research Network, with the intent (subject to quality) of making a single award with an overall value of €1.25 million over five years.** The cost to

the HRB would amount to €625,000 with the remainder of the funding being provided by applicant partners.

## 11. Approval of Panel Recommendations on Awards

### TILDA waves 7-9 funding recommendation

Dr Gill introduced a paper summarising the outcome of the application and peer review process for 3 new waves of the Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA) (<https://tilda.tcd.ie/>). It was noted that the recommendation from the International Panel of experts was to fund 3 new waves (Waves 7 to 9) of TILDA, at a cost of €15 million over six years.

**The Board approved the initiation of contract discussions with both TILDA and the Department of Health.** A final decision on the award of the contract was withheld until the report on the independent look-back evaluation of TILDA is considered by the Board at its meeting on 31 March 2023.

## 12. Corporate reporting

### Procurement Activity Report

The Board noted a report on the following procurement activity:

Between the period 01 November 2022 to 31 December 2022

- Purchase Orders raised with a value more than €20,000
- Contracts awarded between €25,000 and €75,000 (ex VAT)
- Contracts approved by the Board more than €75,000 (ex VAT)
- Authorised exceptions to the competitive procurement guidelines

The Board also noted a table listing supplier expenditure exceeding €25,000 during the twelve months 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2022

## 13. Other governance matters

### Membership of Board Committees

It was agreed that members of the Board would be invited to inform the Secretary if they were interested in serving on the other Committee of the Board and that Committee membership would be reviewed and revised at the next meeting Board. As an interim measure **Dr Bishop was appointed to the HRB Audit & Risk Committee and Dr Barry was appointed to the HRB Management Development Committee.**

### Decisions reserved for the Board and matters delegated to the Executive Team.

**The Board approved the proposed amended listing of matters reserved for decisions by the Board and the listing of matters delegated to the Executive Team subject to maintaining the matter of sponsorship payments in excess of €10,000 requiring Board approval.**

#### **Board self-assessment evaluation questionnaire**

The Board noted the results of the self-assessment evaluation questionnaire. It was agreed that the peer review and assessment of research grant applications was a matter for the Executive and that it was therefore neither appropriate nor necessary to make actual grant applications available to the Board.

The CEO was requested to include in her next CEO's Report, a listing of recent papers provided to the Board on the oversight of clinical trials together with an outline of when future papers and updates will be provided.


It was agreed that it would be beneficial to provide the Board with a diagrammatic overview of the full grant lifecycle from call principles to monitoring and evaluation including approximate timelines. It was also agreed that board papers related to grant funding should indicate the point in the grant life cycle to which the paper refers.

#### **14. Date of next meeting**

The date of the next meeting was set for Friday 31 March 2023.

#### **15. Executive session of the Board**

No decisions were taken during the executive session of the Board.

Signed:    
Prof Bernie Hannigan (Chairperson)

DocuSigned by:  
Bernie Hannigan  
75FBA47D40594D6...