

**Minutes of the Board meeting of the Health Research Board
held on Friday, 31 March 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 (on zoom)
Prof T Fahey
Dr J Ling
Dr T McWade
Prof C Normand
Dr C Saidlear

In attendance: Dr M O'Driscoll, Chief Executive Officer
Ms C Cronin, Board Secretary and Head of Governance
Dr H Sinclair attended for item 5
Mr D Murphy, Finance Manager, attended for items 5 and 11.
Mr M Morgan, Director of Corporate Operations attended for items 5, 11 and 12(a).
Ms Gillian Markey, Communications Manager, attended for item 6.
Dr T Maguire, Director of Research Strategy and Funding, attended for items 5, 8, 9 and 10
Dr Anne Cody, and Dr Annalisa Montesanti, Investigator Led Grants, Careers and Enablers, attended for items 8 and 9(a)
Dr C Creely, Research and Innovation Infrastructures, attended for item 9(b)
Ms O Ward, Research and Innovation Infrastructures, attended for items 9(b) and 10.
Ms M Maguire, Intrinsic attended for item 14

1. Conflict of Interest

Prof Hannigan had declared a conflict of interest in relation to a proposed Centre for Research Excellence in Modelling in Public Health Research and left the meeting while this matter was discussed.

Prof Normand had declared a conflict of interest in relation to the Definitive Interventions and Feasibility Awards (DIFA) 2023 and left the meeting while this matter was discussed.

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Dr Barry declared that the subject matter of a proposed Centre for Research Excellence in Modelling in Public Health Research related to the work of her wider community. The Chairperson advised that Dr Barry should remain present at the meeting while the matter was being discussed but should not participate in discussions or take part in the decision.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 17 February 2023 were approved.

3. Action points from previous meetings

The Board noted that the action points arising from the previous meeting had been addressed.

4. CEO's Report

Sale of 73 Lower Baggot Street

The CEO informed the Board that an offer in excess of the asking price had been accepted for the HRB's former premises at 73 Lower Baggot Street, Dublin 2, and that a proposal to utilise the funds from the sale and would be brought to the Board for discussion at its meeting on 12th May 2023.

PhD stipend review

The CEO informed the Board that a team from the HRB's Research Strategy and Funding Directorate had met with the Co-Chairs of the 'Independent National Review of State Supports for PhD Researchers' and that the HRB had also made a written submission.

Research Bill

Progress on the Research Bill was noted. The Board agreed that the HRB should work with the University Vice Presidents for Research to identify areas for cooperation and support.

Other matters

The CEO also reported on:

- HRB Budget and Service Plan 2023
- Citizens' Assembly on Drugs Use
- Health Data Access Body and Health Information Bill
- 1+ MG, and Implementation Group – genetics and genomics strategy
- Optimising HRB investments in clinical trial activity and Infrastructures 2021-2025 – SAG update
- TILDA evaluation report
- Grant holders conference
- HRB data on drugs and alcohol gaining national and European acclaim.

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- Update on National Office for Research Ethics Committees
- HRB Media Coverage
- Awards made under delegated authority

5. HRB Budget and Service Plan 2023

The Board **approved the HRB Budget and Service Plan 2023 for submission to the Department of Health as the programme of work to be conducted by the HRB during year three of the HRB strategy Health research—making an impact (2021-2025).** The impact on the HRB's multi-annual budget of research costs inflating at a higher rate than the HRB's income was discussed. It was agreed to seek funding for research cost inflation in the submission to the Department of Health for the 2024 allocation.

6. Communications and Stakeholder Engagement

Ms Markey presented to the Board on HRB communications and stakeholder engagement. The presentation identified the HRB's key stakeholders, and the means used to communicate with each stakeholder group. The Board discussed the HRB's use of social media.

7. 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.

8. New Scheme/Call Principles Papers

(a) Centre for Research Excellence in Modelling in Public Health Research

The Board considered the high-level principles of a proposed new initiative focused on creating a new Centre of Research Excellence to build capacity and capability in the area of public health modelling. **It was agreed that HRB staff should commence engagement with SFI and other potential co-funders for this initiative and that work should be undertaken to assess resource requirements and develop draft call documents for the centre. It was agreed that additional funding would be sought for this initiative as part of the funding bid for 2024.**

The difficulty of retaining expertise in mathematics and statistics within the public sector was discussed and it was agreed that it would be desirable to have a career trajectory for the best people, as well as building in long term commitment from the academic institutions. The Board also discussed the importance of access to data for research purposes.

9. Approval to issue calls

(a) Doctoral Training Programme in Precision Medicine in Cancer

The Board approved the issuing of a call for a new Doctoral Training Programme in Precision Medicine in Cancer, under the auspices of the Ireland-Northern Ireland-National Cancer Institute (NCI) Cancer Consortium.

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It was noted that the overall cost to the HRB and HSC Public Health Agency R&D Division to support up to 15 PhD candidates is approximately €1.2 million over eight years and that the cost would be divided between the two agencies based on the number of candidates from each jurisdiction.

(b) Rare Diseases Research and Innovation Catalyst Award (RDCat) 2023

The Board approved the issuing of a call for a Rare Diseases Research and Innovation Catalyst Award (RDCat) 2023 at a cost of approximately €3 million over three years.

10. Approval of Panel Recommendations on Awards

(a) Definitive Interventions and Feasibility Awards (DIFA) 2023

The Board **approved the International Panel recommendations to fund twelve Definitive Intervention and Feasibility Awards at an anticipated cost of approximately €10.24 million over five years.** The Board referenced its decision taken in February 2022 to include specific additional funding of up to €3 million to encourage and support high quality applications in cancer with the aim of increasing the number of cancer patients on clinical trials in Ireland. The recommendation of the panel to fund just one application in the area of cancer trials was discussed.

11. Corporate reporting

Contract valued at in excess of €75,000

The Board **approved the award of a two-year contract to Prism Leadership & Change Consulting Ltd, with an option to extend by one year, for the provision of executive and management training with a maximum value of €90,000 excluding VAT.**

12. Other governance matters

(a) Bequest for Cancer Research

The Board considered the matter of the administration of the bequest from Ms Brenda Buckley (deceased) for the benefit of cancer research and **agreed to request that the legal firm acting as executors should be asked to expedite the distribution of the assets of the estate.** The Board asked to be kept apprised of developments on this matter.

(b) Membership of Board Committees

Board members had been invited to express an interest in rotating out of the Committee that they currently sat on. As a result of this exercise Dr J Ling agreed to be appointed to the HRB Management Development Committee. Dr C Saidleir agreed to be appointed to the HRB Audit and Risk Committee. The membership of the Board's Standing Committees are:

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HRB Management Development Committee

Prof B Hannigan (Chairperson)
Dr S Barry
Prof S Donnelly
Prof T Fahey
Dr J Ling

HRB Audit & Risk Committee

Prof C Normand (Chairperson)
Dr L Bishop
Dr T Cunningham
Dr T McWade
Dr C Saidlear
Mr M Higgins (External)

(c) Report from the HRB Audit & Risk Committee

Prof Normand, Chairperson of the HRB Audit & Risk Committee reported on the proceedings at the meeting held on Friday 24th February. Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 9th December 2023 had been circulated to board members.

(d) Annual Report from the Audit & Risk Committee to the Board 2022

The Board noted the Annual Report from the Audit & Risk Committee is respect of 2022.

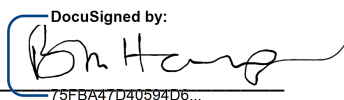
13. Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting was set for Friday 12 May 2023.

14. Executive session of the Board

The Board received a presentation summarizing the outcomes of the 2022 staff survey. After a useful discussion, members requested a (written) copy of the results as presented to the HRB senior management with their agreed actions. This would be an item for the next Board meeting.

Signed: _____

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Prof Bernie Hannigan (Chairperson)

Actions Arising from the Board Meeting of 31 March 2023

No.	Action
1.	Proposal to utilise the funds from the sale of 73 Lower Baggot Street to be brought to the Board for discussion at its meeting on 12 th May 2023
2.	Funding for research cost inflation to be sought in the submission to the Department of Health for the 2024 allocation.
3.	Funding for the Centre for Research Excellence in Modelling in Public Health Research to be sought as part of the funding bid for 2024
4.	Board to be kept apprised of developments on the administration of the bequest from Ms Brenda Buckley (deceased) for the benefit of cancer research
5	A (written) copy of the results of the 2022 staff survey as presented to the HRB senior management with their agreed actions to be an item for the next Board meeting.