

Minutes of VMD Management Board meeting held on 24 September 2020

Members

Julia Drown (Chair)
David Catlow
David Corner

Present

Abigail Seager - VMD
Mike Griffiths – VMD
Linda Simmons – VMD
John Millward - VMD
Sandra Russell – VMD
Stacey Brown - VMD
Chris Abbott – VMD (note taker)

1. Announcements and apologies for absence

1.1 The meeting was held by video conference. Apologies were received from Peter Borriello, Paul Green, David Kennedy and Christine Middlemiss.

2. Declarations of interest in the matters to be discussed

2.1 None.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2020

VMDMB 20/27

3.1 The minutes were agreed.

4. Matters Arising/Actions

VMDMB 20/28

4.1 There were no matters arising.

5. Covid-19: Impact on VMD and veterinary medicines supply chain

VMDMB 20/29

- 5.1 Stacey Brown (General Assessment and Licensing Administration) and Sandra Russell (Corporate Services Team) gave a presentation on the impact of Covid-19 on VMD and medicines. VMD's VADER (Veterinary medicines Availability and Disease and Emergency Response) procedures had been activated at the beginning of lockdown and had ensured that the supply of medicines had been maintained through a process of monitoring and communication with MA holders, wholesale dealers and other government departments. VADER sends reports to Defra's Emergency Operations Centre (EOC), as do other sectors; these reports are co-ordinated so that the Defra group can provide effective responses to the emergency and coherent briefings to ministers. The EOC provides daily situation reports via the Cabinet dashboard. VMD staff provide cover outside of normal working hours for urgent matters and emergency calls are redirected to Directors at weekends. Responsible staff have had to cover several roles during the pandemic but business as usual has been maintained.
- 5.2 VMD has received over 200 commissions from the government which have required actioning, often within tight deadlines. They have covered a range of issues, including finding reliable sources of active ingredients, dealing with PPE demand within the sector, finding alternative veterinary replacements in case human medicines became unavailable and identifying veterinary manufacturers with the capability to manufacture human medicines.
- 5.3 As part of its emergency response plan during the early part of lockdown, VMD made sure all staff were able to work remotely and were given an allowance to purchase the equipment they needed. Staff wellbeing groups were also set up. Regular meetings were held with stakeholders and information and updates were placed on Gov.uk. Legislation facilitations were introduced to help stakeholders continue to operate effectively.
- 5.4 Going forward, many lessons have been learnt dealing with the situation and VADER has become a normal part of working life but it needs to be established where it sits in the VMD.

VMD is part of a cross-government project looking at making supply chains more efficient and what stockpiling of medicines is needed. It was noted that tried and tested alternative solutions have been in place for a while, such as the special import scheme and extemporaneous medicine production.

6. CEO's Report (and annexes)

VMDMB 20/24 & VMDMB 20/25

- 6.1 The CEO's report was reviewed. Directors were asked to check whether non-execs could attend any of the remote events being planned to further familiarise themselves with the work of the VMD

ACTION

7. Delivery against the Business Plan 2020/21

VMDMB 20/30

- 7.1 Delivery against the Business Plan was reviewed.

8. Transition and Trade activities

- 8.1 VMD reported that the Northern Ireland Protocol remains the area of most risk. It is planned to carry out assessment work on DAERA's behalf and clarification is needed in regards to what access can be obtained to EU systems and databases and what defines a Northern Ireland business. VMD's new and replacement IT systems are now all in public beta. It is anticipated that new veterinary medicines legislation will be laid in parliament before the end of the year providing there are no delays. Clarification is needed as to whether companies based in the EU which market products in the UK need to be based in the UK at the end of the 2 year grace period.

9. Finance report

VMDMB 20/39

- 9.1 Allowing customers to pay by direct debit was suggested as a way of countering debt and this would be looked into. It was noted that funding received to compensate for lack of income not yet used could be used for other things as long as it was justified and value for money was considered. A bid for underspend funds had been submitted to Defra to use for online training modules for low and middle income countries.

10. Members' declarations of interests

- 10.1 Members' annual declarations of interests were reviewed.

11. Management Board work plan

- 11.1 The work plan was reviewed.

12. Any other business

- 12.1 It was noted that VMD was in the process of extending members' terms of appointment.

13. Dates of future meetings

- 13.1 The next meeting would be held on 8 December

**Veterinary Medicines Directorate
September 2020**