MINUTES OF VMD MANAGEMENT BOARD MEETING HELD ON 25 JUNE 2026

Members
Alison White (Chair)
Laura Catterick
Abigail Seager – VMD
Gavin Hall - VMD
Mike Griffiths – VMD
Richard Ayris – VMD

Present
Lea Reynolds – VMD (for item 8)
Kitty Healey – VMD (for item 8)
Chris Abbott – VMD (note taker)

1. Announcements and apologies for absence

1.1 The Chair welcome VMD's new Head of Finance Richard Ayris to the Board.

1.2 Apologies were received from David Catlow.

2. Declarations of interest in the matters to be discussed

2.1 No interests were declared.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2026 **VMDMB 26/14**

3.1 The minutes were agreed.

4. Matters Arising **VMDMB 26/15**

4.1 Several actions had been completed and could be closed. It was noted that the upcoming change in Prime Minister may result in the timeline for the spending review changing.

5. Chair's Report

5.1 The Chair noted that the general uncertainty of the domestic and worldwide geo-political environment has worsened and the Agency risks need to be continually tested against this. Mitigations need to include sufficient flexibility to withstand further shocks and re-prioritisation. A more in-depth discussion about the risk environment will be held at the in-person Board meeting in October.

5.2 The implications of this situation for Defra and other departments are financial strictures and the challenge of making the books balance in the current financial year. To this end, a new departmental outcomes framework document has recently become available and will be circulated to Board members. The Chair has concerns about the ability of the department to cut its cloth according to the resources available, and whether the framework really does provide sufficient rigour over prioritisation, and clarity about what the department will not be doing in the light of highly restricted resources.

5.3 VMD continues to have a very busy agenda - in addition to its core responsibilities, a lot of work is required in regard to EU reset, vaccine availability and pharmaceuticals in the environment amongst other things. In addition, in-year changes and additional tasks are emerging, causing constant change and re-prioritisation. The VMD is not immune from the political turmoil in Westminster and the impact that politics is having on its ability to operate with clarity rather than in a political fog.

5.4 The Chair was pleased to present her annual report to the Board and drew attention to the recommendation for a review of our terms of reference and a discussion about the value that the Board can provide to the Executive at the next meeting.

6. CEO's Report **VMDMB 26/16-18**

6.1 VMD's CEO had attended a meeting with the Permanent Secretary where it was explained that the purpose of the Defra outcomes framework is not to set out the priorities but to bring a shared understanding of outcomes and governance. There are three outcomes that VMD directly feed into with Defra directors or DGs being SRO for these.

6.2 The CEO along with the Minister and other VMD and Environment Agency representatives had provided evidence this week to the Lords Select Committee on Environment and Climate Change inquiry on pet parasiticides and their contamination of water ways. They reported that actives from parasiticides are present in water but there is still insufficient evidence on the effects they are having on biodiversity. The committee's report is due in the summer. VMD's call for evidence on the environmental impact of flea and tick treatments for dogs has now closed and responses will be analysed over a 12-week period before outcomes are reported.

6.3 The CEO and other VMD representatives will attend and Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (EFRA) public Committee meeting next week to give evidence on the work of the ALBs towards biosecurity and animal welfare. Directors have held several meetings with pharmaceutical companies which are proving insightful and helping to improve mutual understanding of the animal health sector in the years ahead. The office building modernisation plans are on hold following funding reductions.

6.4 VMD activities are subject to political pressures on issues like the review of the Veterinary Surgeons Act and TB strategy and the Agency is sometimes unhelpfully looped out during the initial stages. This has been picked up with the relevant Defra teams to re-think ways of working more collaboratively. Legal resource for carrying out work on EU reset is limited and has been escalated as a risk

7. ARAC Chair's Report **VMDMB 26/19-23**

7.1 The ARAC Chair gave a report from the June meeting at which VMD's annual report and accounts for 2025/26 had been endorsed. The internal auditor had delivered their final audit for the year and their annual report gave an overall moderate opinion. The NAO had presented unqualified accounts for the year and had praised VMD's finance team for their co-operation during the process. The new internal auditor's flexible plan for the year was noted and they had delivered their first report in draft. A review of ARAC effectiveness had been completed and members have provided advice on VMD's revised business continuity plan. The Chair will provide a third and final session on understanding and tolerating risks to VMD senior managers in July.

7.3 The MB Chair noted the importance of regulatory activities supporting the government's growth agenda and the need for VMD to face into challenges which affect its ability to deliver. The organisation's strategic risk reporting needs to take this into account and articulate its appetite for risk better. Stakeholder management and influencing their behaviours is increasingly important and VMD intends to revise its comms strategy to achieve this.

7.4 It had been discussed in June how to separate the roles of ARAC and Management Board and the Chair clarified that ARAC's role is to provide advice about the effectiveness of risk processes and to enable the Board to reach decisions and provide advice to the accounting officer. This is stated in the terms of reference which reflect the framework document and Cabinet Office guidance. In the autumn the Board will consider advice from ARAC on risk appetite and look at the strategic risk register.

7.5 A substantial list of emerging risks had been provided to the ARAC meeting. The MB Chair noted it was good practice to look at risks from a different perspective than usually provided and noted that AI can be used to produce reports from information in risk

systems. The potential use of new technologies is something that can be taken up with the new ARAC chair.

7.6 The annual report for ARAC was noted. The VMD's annual report and accounts for 2025/26 had been reviewed and a positive recommendation made to the CEO to sign.

8. Board Briefings

8.1 The VMD's Head of Policy Development and Delivery gave an update on the review of the Veterinary Surgeons Act which is being led by a small team in Defra. The Act was implemented in 1966 and is no longer fit for purpose and the aim is to increase its scope through a skeleton bill which will require a lot of secondary legislation. This ties in with the CMA's review of the veterinary sector and is a big piece of work - the consultation on the VSA held earlier this year generated 6,000 responses. Implications for the VMD involve the possible transfer of responsibility for inspections of veterinary sector premises, which it currently carries out jointly with the RCVS, to the RCVS alone, although this raises a conflict of interest around a representative body also being a regulator. VMD also has concerns whether it has the skillset required. The change would also affect DAERA which is responsible for inspecting some poultry premises in Northern Ireland. Under the current arrangement, VMD carries out around 40% of inspections and stopping them would mean a significant impact on income and work so any scenario planning needs to be handled sensitively.

8.2 The VMD's head of AMR gave an update on the ways her section is looking to continue into 2026/27 the significant achievements already made in reducing the unnecessary use of antimicrobials. The Ruminant Antibiotic Stewardship Roadmap has been introduced to deal with the challenge of collecting data for cattle and sheep. ISF funding has been made available for the private laboratories initiative and an AMR pilot launched for small animals. Plans are being made to implement EU SPS ingredient rules. VMD is forging ahead with the International Panel for Evidence for Action against AMR (IPEA) despite delays. Less financial support is available since the Fleming Fund closed but VMD has secured ODA funding following the 2024 UNGA political declaration against AMR. The Board welcomed this and appreciated the actions being taken.

9. Business Performance **VMDMB 26/24 & 25**

9.1 The Board noted the good progress made so far against the business plan.

9.2 The VMD's budget for 2026/27 was presented with Defra funding being broadly stable from last year. The Chair noted the need to maintain the improvements made to the way allocated money is spent on areas like recruitment and IT transformation and VMD noted that staff turnover has reduced and actions will be taken to ensure spending plans are fulfilled. The Board asked to be kept informed on progress made increasing commercial revenue and VMD confirmed that proposals for income generation through new fees are being considered in order achieve full cost recovery in 2028/29 despite significant economic pressures.

10. Any other Business

10.1 The Chair noted this was Laura Catterick's last meeting before leaving the VMD in July to take up another full-time role and thanked her on behalf of the Board for her valued tenure and wished her every success in her new venture.

Veterinary Medicines Directorate
June 2026