

Business Committee Report – 16 March 2026

INFO 26-03-02 - Report from Timothy Riley

The Business Committee met on 16 March 2026 to consider the following items.

1. Chief Executive's Report (FSA BC 26/03/03)

Katie Pettifer provided an update covering Incidents, the National Food Crime Unit (NFCU) and the FSA's financial position. The infant formula contamination incident, now de-escalated, had required significant joint working with UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), retailers and international counterparts. Despite the scale of product recall, public health impact had remained low, and the experience highlighted vulnerabilities in concentrated supply chains. Lessons for future resilience work had been identified.

Sampling activity across the Agency had contributed to the increase in incident volumes, although improvements to the PRISM system meant surge capacity had not been required. International cooperation through an updated Memorandum of Understanding with Italy had supported recent successful NFCU activity. On finance, the previous risk of an overspend had now become a small underspend. This was partly due to delayed recruitment and a VAT issue under discussion with HMRC.

2. Performance Report Q3 2025–26 (FSA BC 26/03/04)

Ian Gibson introduced the Performance Report and invited Directors to discuss various sections of the report.

Operational delivery

Operational delivery remained strong overall, and high levels of incidents could be attributed partly to targeted surveillance. Raw drinking milk sampling failures were experienced on only 2% of farms; follow-up actions were underway. The Committee emphasised any learning should be shared from an individual case where there had been repeated incidents.

Local Authority Performance

Local authority performance continued to show gradual recovery, though pressures remained acute. Recruitment was improving but experience levels were mixed, and the transition to the Food Standards Delivery Model (FSDM) continued to create data quality issues. Work was ongoing to support authorities and escalate non-compliance where needed.

Market Authorisations

The Market Authorisation caseload had reduced slightly, with progress on Precision Breeding and Precision Fermentation. The Committee noted significant implications linked to Sanitary and

Phytosanitary (SPS) negotiations and the importance of clear communication with applicants.

Science

Performance indicators remained positive, although the Committee noted that indicators measured process rather than outcome. Outcome indicators being of greater value in evidencing 'return on investment'.

Trade & International

Trade and international work was being increasingly shaped by SPS alignment planning, particularly in relation to import controls and market access audits.

Communications

Recent communications activity in December had been shaped by two major drivers: the FSA's proactive festive food safety campaign and significant media interest linked to the Dubai chocolate recall. Engagement levels on social media had dipped slightly, reflecting reduced posting over the Christmas period rather than any underlying change in audience sentiment. Trust in the FSA remained high.

3. Annual Plan and Budget 2026/27 (FSA BC 26/03/05)

Ian Gibson presented the FSA's annual plan and budget to the Committee, noting the impact of the SPS business case and the need for ongoing monitoring of delivery capacity. The watchdog function remained limited but stable. Members emphasised the importance of transparent tracking of change programmes alongside core performance monitoring.

4. Local Authority Performance Update (FSA BC 26/03/06)

Nathan Barnhouse and Nathan Phillipo outlined continued pressure on local authority services driven by new business registrations and resource constraints. Implementation of the FSDM was progressing well for most authorities, though a minority had not completed the data conversion and were entering the performance management escalation process. Around 30% of authorities were not expected to provide full granularity data in April due to Management Information System (MIS) delays with aggregate returns being required instead. The Committee stressed the need for visibility of progress and reliability of future reporting.

5. Regulation Action Plan Commitments (FSA BC 26/03/07)

David Holmes reported that all of the FSA's commitments under the Chancellor's Regulation Action Plan had been delivered on schedule. The Committee recognised improvements in cross-government engagement arising from this work.

6. Cell-Cultivated Products (CCP) Sandbox Progress (FSA BC 26/03/08)

The Committee heard from Tom Vincent that the Sandbox continued to make progress with risk assessments for two CCP applications underway and bespoke guidance published. Industry confidence and interest had increased, and the Committee emphasised the importance of transparent timelines for both applicants and internal processes. The Committee thanked the

team for the progress achieved to date.

7. Any Other Business

There were no additional items raised. The next meeting would take place on 8 June 2026.

Annex - Business Committee Papers

- [Minutes of 1 December 2025 Business Committee Meeting](#)
- [Actions Arising](#)
- [Chief Executive's Report to the Business Committee](#)
- [Performance Report Q3 2025-26](#)
- [2026/27 Annual Plan and Budget](#)
- [Local Authority Performance Update](#)
- [Regulation Action Plan Commitments Update](#)
- [Regulatory Sandbox for Cell-Cultivated Products \(CCPs\)](#)